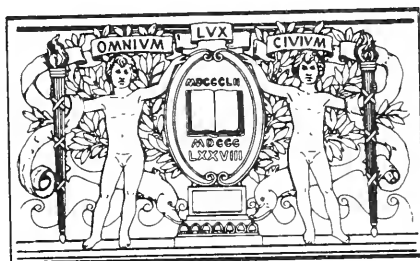




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THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF  
THE EUROPEAN NATIONS  
1870-1900

BY  
J. HOLLAND ROSE, Litt.D.

Late Scholar of Christ's College, Cambridge; Author of "The Life of  
Napoleon I," etc.

*"Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas."*

VIRGIL.

WITH MAPS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME TWO

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN  
NATIONS



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN NATIONS

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## CHAPTER I

### THE TRIPLE AND DUAL ALLIANCES

“International policy is a fluid element which, under certain conditions, will solidify, but, on a change of atmosphere, reverts to its original condition.”—BISMARCK’S *Reflections and Reminiscences*.

IT is one thing to build up a system of states; it is quite another thing to guarantee their existence. As in the life of individuals, so in that of nations, longevity is generally the result of a sound constitution, a healthy environment, and prudent conduct. That the new States of Europe possessed the first two of these requisites will be obvious to all who remember that they are co-extensive with those great limbs of Humanity, nations. Yet even so they needed protection from the intrigues of jealous dynasties and of dispossessed princes or priests, which have so often doomed promising experiments to failure. It is therefore essential to our present study to observe the means which endowed the European system with stability.

Here again the master-builder was Bismarck. As he had concentrated all the powers of his mind on the completion of German unity (with its natural counterpart in Italy),

so, too, he kept them on the stretch for its preservation. For two decades his policy bestrode the continent like a Colossus. It rested on two supporting ideas. The one was the maintenance of alliance with Russia, which had brought the events of the years 1863-70 within the bounds of possibility; the other aim was the isolation of France. Subsidiary notions now and again influenced him, as in 1884 when he sought to make bad blood between Russia and England in Central Asian affairs (see Chapter III.), or to busy all the Powers in colonial undertakings; but these considerations were secondary to the two main motives, which at one point converged and begot a haunting fear (the realisation of which overclouded his last years) that Russia and France would unite against Germany.

In order, as he thought, to obviate for ever a renewal of the "policy of Tilsit" of the year 1807, he sought to favour the establishment of the Republic in France. In his eyes, the more radical it was, the better; and when Count von Arnim, the German Ambassador at Paris, ventured to contravene his instructions in this matter, he subjected him to severe reproof and finally to disgrace. However harsh in his methods, Bismarck was undoubtedly right in substance. The main consideration was that which he set forth in his letter of December 20, 1872, to the Count: "We want France to leave us in peace, and we have to prevent France's finding an ally if she does not keep the peace. As long as France has no allies she is not dangerous to Germany." A monarchical reaction, he thought, might lead France to accord with Russia or Austria. A republic of the type sought for by Gambetta could never achieve that task. Better, then, the red flag waving at Paris than the *fleur-de-lys*.

Still more important was it to bring about complete accord between the three Empires. Here again the red spectre proved to be useful. Various signs seemed to point to socialism as the common enemy of them all. The doctrines of Bakunin, Herzen, and Lassalle had already begun to work threateningly in their midst, and Bismarck discreetly used this community of interest in one particular to bring about an agreement on matters purely political. In the month of September, 1872, he realised one of his dearest hopes. The Czar, Alexander II., and the Austrian Emperor, Francis Joseph, visited Berlin, where they were most cordially received. At that city the Chancellors of the three Empires exchanged official memoranda—there seems to have been no formal treaty<sup>1</sup>—whereby they agreed to work together for the following purposes: the maintenance of the boundaries recently laid down, the settlement of problems arising from the Eastern Question, and the repression of revolutionary movements in Europe.

Such was the purport of the Three Emperors' League of 1872. There is little doubt that Bismarck had worked on the Czar, always nervous as to the growth of the Nihilist movement in Russia, in order to secure his adhesion to the first two provisions of the new compact, which certainly did not benefit Russia. The German Chancellor has since told us that, as early as the month of September, 1870, he sought to form such a league, with the addition of the newly united Italian realm, in order to safeguard the interests of monarchy against republicans and

<sup>1</sup> In his speech of February 19, 1878, Bismarck said: "The *liaison* of the three Emperors, which is habitually designated an alliance, rests on no written agreement and does not compel any one of the three Emperors to submit to the decisions of the two others."

revolutionaries.<sup>1</sup> After the lapse of two years his wish took effect, though Italy as yet did not join the cause of order. The new league stood forth as the embodiment of autocracy and a terror to the dissatisfied, whether revengeful Gauls, Danes, or Poles, intriguing cardinals—it was the time of the “May Laws”—or excited men who waved the red flag. It was a new version of the Holy Alliance formed after Waterloo by the monarchs of the very same Powers, which, under the plea of watching against French enterprises, succeeded in bolstering up despotism on the Continent for a whole generation.

Fortunately for the cause of liberty, the new league had little of the solidity of its predecessor. Either because the dangers against which it guarded were less serious, or owing to the jealousies which strained its structure from within, signs of weakness soon appeared, and the imposing fabric was disfigured by cracks which all the plastering of diplomatists failed to conceal. An eminent Russian historian, M. Tatischeff, has recently discovered the hidden divulsive agency. It seems that, not long after the formation of the Three Emperors' League, Germany and Austria secretly formed a separate compact, whereby the former agreed eventually to secure to the latter due compensation in the Balkan Peninsula for her losses in the wars of 1859 and 1866 (Lombardy, Venetia, and the control of the German Confederation, along with Holstein).<sup>2</sup>

That is, the two Central Powers in 1872 secretly agreed to take action in the way in which Austria advanced in 1877-78, when she secured Herzegovina. When and to

<sup>1</sup> Débidour, *Histoire diplomatique de l'Europe*, ii., pp. 458-459; Bismarck, *Reflections and Reminiscences*, vii., chap. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> *The Emperor Alexander II.: His Life and Reign*, by S. S. Tatischeff (St. Petersburg, 1903), Appendix to vol. ii.

what extent Russian diplomatists became aware of this separate agreement is not known, but their suspicion or their resentment appears to have prompted them to the unfriendly action towards Germany which they took in the year 1875. According to the Bismarck *Reflections and Reminiscences*, the Russian Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff, felt so keenly jealous of the rapid rise of the German Chancellor to fame and pre-eminence as to spread "the lie" that Germany was about to fall upon France. Even the uninitiated reader might feel some surprise that the Russian Chancellor should have endangered the peace of Europe and his own credit as a statesman for so slight a motive; but it now seems that Bismarck's assertion must be looked on as a "reflection," not as a "reminiscence."

The same remark may perhaps apply to his treatment of the "affair of 1875," which largely determined the future groupings of the Powers. At that time the recovery of France from the wounds of 1870 was well-nigh complete; her military and constitutional systems were taking concrete form; and in the early part of the year 1875 the Chambers decreed a large increase to the armed forces in the form of "the fourth battalions." At once the military party at Berlin took alarm, and through their chief, Moltke, pressed on the Emperor William the need of striking promptly at France. The Republic, so they argued, could not endure the strain which it now voluntarily underwent; the outcome must be war; and war at once would be the most statesmanlike and merciful course. Whether the Emperor in any way acceded to these views is not known. He is said to have more than once expressed a keen desire to end his reign in peace.

The part which Bismarck played at this crisis is also

somewhat obscure. If the German Government wished to attack France, the natural plan would have been to keep that design secret until the time for action arrived. But it did not do so. Early in the month of April, von Radowitz, a man of high standing at the Court of Berlin, took occasion to speak to the French Ambassador, de Gontaut-Biron, at a ball, and warned him in the most significant manner of the danger of war owing to the increase of French armaments. According to de Blowitz, the Paris correspondent of the *Times* (who had his information direct from the French Premier, the Duc Decazes), Germany intended to "bleed France white" by compelling her finally to pay ten milliards of francs in twenty instalments, and by keeping an army of occupation in her Eastern Departments until the last half-milliard was paid. The French Ambassador also states in his account of these stirring weeks that Bismarck had mentioned to the Belgian envoy the impossibility of France keeping up armaments, the outcome of which must be war.<sup>1</sup>

As Radowitz continued in favour with Bismarck, his disclosure of German intentions seems to have been made with the Chancellor's approval; and we may explain his actions as either a threat to compel France to reduce her army, a provocation to lead her to commit some indiscretion, or a means of undermining the plans of the German military party. Leaving these questions on one side, we may note that Gontaut-Biron's report to the Duc Decazes produced the utmost anxiety in official circles at Paris. The Duke took the unusual step of confiding the secret to Blowitz,

<sup>1</sup> De Blowitz, *Memoirs*, chap. v.; *An Ambassador of the Vanquished* (ed. by the Duc de Broglie), pp. 180 *et seq.* Probably the article "Krieg in Sicht," published in the *Berlin Post* of April 15, 1875, was "inspired."



showed him the document, along with other proofs of German preparations for war, and requested him to publish the chief facts in the *Times*. Delane, the editor of the *Times*, having investigated the affair, published the information on May 4th. It produced an immense sensation. The Continental press denounced it as an impudent fabrication designed to bring on war. We now know that it was substantially correct. Meanwhile Marshal MacMahon and the Duc Decazes had taken steps to solicit the help of the Czar if need arose. They despatched to St. Petersburg General Leflô, armed with proofs of the hostile designs of the German military chiefs. A perusal of them convinced Alexander II. of the seriousness of the situation; and he assured Leflô of his resolve to prevent an unprovoked attack on France. He was then about to visit his uncle, the German Emperor; and there is little doubt that his influence at Berlin helped to end the crisis.

Other influences were also at work, emanating from Queen Victoria and the British Government. It is well known that Her late Majesty wrote to the Emperor William stating that it would be "easy to prove her fears [of a Franco-German war] were not exaggerated."<sup>1</sup> The source of her information is now known to have been unexceptionable. It reached the British Foreign Office through the medium of German Ambassadors. Such is the story imparted by Lord Odo Russell, the British Ambassador at Berlin, to his brother, and by him communicated to Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff. It concerns an interview between Gortchakoff and Bismarck in which the German Chancellor inveighed against the Russian Prince for blurt-

<sup>1</sup> Bismarck: *Reflections*, etc., ii., pp. 191-193, 249-253 (Eng. ed.); the *Bismarck Jahrbuch*, iv., p. 35.

ing out, at a State banquet held the day before, the news that he had received a letter from Queen Victoria, begging him to work in the interests of peace. Bismarck thereafter sharply upbraided Gortchakoff for this amazing indiscretion. Lord Odo Russell was present at their interview in order to support the Russian Chancellor, who parried Bismarck's attack by affecting a paternal interest in his health:

“ ‘Come, come, my dear Bismarck, be calm. You know that I am very fond of you. I have known you since your childhood. But I do not like you when you are hysterical. Come, you are going to be hysterical. Pray be calm: come, come, my dear fellow.’ A short time after this interview Bismarck complained to Odo of ‘the preposterous folly and ignorance of the English and all other Cabinets, who had mistaken stories got up for speculations on the Bourse for the true policy of the German Government.’ ‘Then will you,’ asked Odo, ‘censure your four ambassadors who have misled us and the other Powers?’ Bismarck made no reply.”<sup>1</sup>

It seems, then, that the German Chancellor had no ground for suspicion against the Crown Princess as having informed Queen Victoria of the suggested attack on France; but thenceforth he had an intense dislike of these august ladies, and lost no opportunity of maligning them in diplomatic circles and through the medium of the press. Yet, while nursing resentful thoughts against Queen Victoria, her daughter, and the British Ministry, the German Chancellor reserved his wrath mainly for his personal rival at St. Petersburg. The publication of Gortchakoff's cir-

<sup>1</sup> Sir M. Grant Duff, *Notes from a Diary*, 1886-88, i., p. 129. See, too, other proofs of the probability of an attack by Germany on France in Professor Geffcken's *Frankreich, Russland, und der Dreibund*, pp. 90 et seq.

cular despatch of May 10, 1875, beginning with the words "*Maintenant la paix est assurée*," was in his eyes the crowning offence.

The result was the beginning of a good understanding between Russia and France, and the weakening of the Three Emperors' League.<sup>1</sup> That league went to pieces for a time amidst the disputes at the Berlin Congress on the Eastern Question, where Germany's support of Austria's resolve to limit the sphere of Muscovite influence robbed the Czar of prospective spoils and placed a rival Power as "sentinel on the Balkans." Further, when Germany favoured Austrian interests in the many matters of detail that came up for settlement in those States, the rage in Russian official circles knew no bounds. Newspapers like the *Journal de St. Pétersbourg*, the *Russki Mir*, and the *Golos*, daily poured out the vials of their wrath against everything German; and that prince of publicists, Katkoff, with his coadjutor, Élie de Cyon, moved heaven and earth in the endeavour to prove that Bismarck alone had pushed Russia on to war with Turkey, and then had intervened to rob her of the fruits of victory. Amidst these clouds of invective, friendly hands were thrust forth from Paris and Moscow, and the effusive salutations of the would-be statesmen marked the first beginnings of the present alliance. A Russian General—Obretchhoff—went to Paris and "sounded the leading personages in Paris respecting a Franco-Russian alliance."<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, it was high time for the two Central Powers to draw together. There was little to hinder their *rapprochement*. Bismarck's clemency to the Hapsburg Power in the

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de l'entente Franco-Russe*, by Élie de Cyon, ch. i. (1895).

<sup>2</sup> *Our Chancellor*, by M. Busch, ii., pp. 137-138.

hour of Prussia's triumph in 1866 now bore fruit; for when Russia sent a specific demand that the Court of Berlin must cease to support Austrian interests or forfeit the friendship of Russia, the German Chancellor speedily came to an understanding with Count Andrassy in an interview at Gastein on August 27-28, 1879. At first it had reference only to a defensive alliance against an attack by Russia, Count Andrassy, then about to retire from his arduous duties, declining to extend the arrangement to an attack by another Power—obviously France. The plan of the Austro-German alliance was secretly submitted by Bismarck to the King of Bavaria, who signified his complete approval.<sup>1</sup> It received a warm welcome from the Hapsburg Court; and, when the secret leaked out, Bismarck had enthusiastic greetings on his journey to Vienna and thence northwards to Berlin. The reason is obvious. For the first time in modern history the centre of Europe seemed about to form a lasting compact, strong enough to impose respect on the restless extremities. That of 1813 and 1814 had aimed only at the driving of Napoleon from Germany. The present alliance had its roots in more abiding needs.

Strange to say, the chief obstacle was Kaiser Wilhelm himself. The old sovereign had very many claims on the gratitude of the German race, for his staunchness of character, singleness of aim, and homely good sense had made the triumphs of his reign possible. But the newer light of to-day reveals the limitations of his character. He never saw far ahead, and even in his survey of the present situation Prussian interests and family considerations held far too large a space. It was so now. Against the wishes

<sup>1</sup>Bismarck: *Reflections and Reminiscences*, ii., pp. 251-289.

of his Chancellor, he went to meet the Czar at Alexandrovo; and while the Austro-German compact took form at Gastein and Vienna, Czar and Kaiser were assuring each other of their unchanging friendship. Doubtless Alexander II. was sincere in these professions of affection for his august uncle; but Bismarck paid more heed to the fact that Russia had recently made large additions to her army, while dense clouds of her horsemen hung about the Polish border, ready to flood the Prussian plains. He saw safety only by opposing force to force. As he said to his secretary, Busch: "When we [Germany and Austria] are united, with our two million soldiers back to back, they [the Russians] with their Nihilism will doubtless think twice before disturbing the peace." Finally the Emperor William agreed to the Austro-German compact, provided that the Czar should be informed that if he attacked Austria he would be opposed by both Powers.<sup>1</sup>

It was not until November 5, 1887, that the terms of the treaty were made known, and then through the medium of the *Times*. The official publication did not take place until February 3, 1888, at Berlin, Vienna, and Buda-Pesth. The compact provides that if either Germany or Austria shall be attacked by Russia, each Power must assist its neighbour with all its forces. If, however, the attack shall come from any other Power, the ally is pledged merely to observe neutrality; and not until Russia enters the field is the ally bound to set its armies in motion. Obviously the second case implies an attack by France on Germany; in that case Austria would remain neutral, carefully watching the conduct of Russia. As far as is

<sup>1</sup> Bismarck: *Some Secret Pages of his History*, by M. Busch, ii., p. 404; Bismarck: *Reflections and Reminiscences*, ii., p. 268.

known, the treaty does not provide for joint action, or mutual support, in regard to the Eastern Question, still less in matters further afield.

In order to give pause to Russia, Bismarck even indulged in a passing flirtation with England. At the close of 1879, Lord Dufferin, then British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, was passing through Berlin, and the Chancellor invited him to his estate at Varzin, and informed him that Russian overtures had been made to France through General Obretcheff, "but Chanzy [French Ambassador at St. Petersburg] having reported that Russia was not ready, the French Government became less disposed than ever to embark on an adventurous policy."<sup>1</sup>

To the end of his days Bismarck maintained that the Austro-German alliance did not imply the lapse of the Three Emperors' League, but that the new compact, by making a Russian attack on Austria highly dangerous, if not impossible, helped to prolong the life of the old alliance. Obviously, however, the League was a mere "loud-sounding nothing" (to use a phrase of Metternich's) when two of its members had to unite to guard the weakest of the trio against the most aggressive. In the spirit of that statesmanlike utterance of Prince Bismarck quoted as motto at the head of this chapter, we may say that the old Triple Alliance slowly dissolved under the influence of new atmospheric conditions. The three Emperors met for friendly intercourse in 1881, 1884, and 1885; and at or after the meeting of 1884, a Russo-German agreement was formed, by which the two Powers promised to observe a friendly neutrality in case either was attacked by a third

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava*, by Sir A. Lyall (1905), i., p. 304.

Power. Probably the Afghan question, or Nihilism, brought Russia to accept Bismarck's advances; but when the fear of an Anglo-Russian war passed away, and the revolutionists were curbed, this agreement fell to the ground; and after the fall of Bismarck the compact was not renewed.<sup>1</sup>

It will be well now to turn to the events which brought Italy into line with the Central Powers and thus laid the foundation of the Triple Alliance of to-day.

The complex and uninteresting annals of Italy after the completion of her unity do not concern us here. The men whose achievements had ennobled the struggle for independence passed away in quick succession after the capture of Rome for the national cause. Mazzini died in March, 1872, at Pisa, mourning that united Italy was so largely the outcome of foreign help and monarchical bargainings. Garibaldi spent his last years in fulminating against the Government of Victor Emmanuel. The soldiering himself passed away in January, 1878, and his relentless opponent Pius IX. expired a month later. The accession of Umberto I. and the election of Leo XIII. promised at first to assuage the feud between the Vatican and the Quirinal, but neither the tact of the new sovereign nor the personal suavity of the Pope brought about any real change. Italy remained a prey to the schism between Church and State. A further cause of weakness was the unfitness of many parts of the Peninsula for constitutional rule. Naples and the south were a century behind the north in all that made for civic efficiency, the taint of

<sup>1</sup> On October 24, 1896, the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, a paper often inspired by Bismarck, gave some information (all that is known) about this shadowy agreement.

favouritism and corruption having spread from the governing circles to all classes of society. Clearly the time of wooing had been too short and feverish to lead up to a placid married life.

During this period of debt and disenchantment came news of a slight inflicted by the Latin sister of the north. France had seized Tunis, a land on which Italian patriots looked as theirs by reversion, whereas the exigencies of statecraft assigned it to the French. It seems that during the Congress of Berlin (June-July, 1878) Bismarck and Lord Salisbury unofficially dropped suggestions that their Governments would raise no objections to the occupation of Tunis by France. According to de Blowitz, Bismarck there took an early opportunity of seeing Lord Beaconsfield and of pointing out the folly of England quarrelling with Russia, when she might arrange matters more peaceably and profitably with her. England, said he, should let Russia have Constantinople and take Egypt in exchange; "France would not prove inexorable—besides, one might give her Tunis or Syria."<sup>1</sup> Another Congress story is to the effect that Lord Salisbury, on hearing of the annoyance felt in France at England's control over Cyprus, said to M. Waddington at Berlin: "Do what you like with Tunis; England will raise no objections." A little later, the two Governments came to a written understanding that France might occupy Tunis at a convenient opportunity.

The seizure of Tunis by France aroused all the more annoyance in Italy owing to the manner of its accomplishment. On May 11, 1881, when a large expedition was

<sup>1</sup> De Blowitz, *Memoirs*, ch. vi.; also Busch, *Our Chancellor*, ii., pp. 92-93.



being prepared in her southern ports, M. Barthélémy de St. Hilaire disclaimed all idea of annexation, and asserted that the sole aim of France was the chastisement of a troublesome border tribe, the Kroumirs; but on the entry of the "red breeches" into Kairwan and the collapse of the Moslem resistance, the official assurance proved to be as unsubstantial as the inroads of the Kroumirs. Despite the protests that came from Rome and Constantinople, France virtually annexed that land, though the Sultan's representative, the Bey, still retains the shadow of authority.<sup>1</sup>

In vain did King Umberto's Ministers appeal to Berlin for help against France. They received the reply that the affair had been virtually settled at the time of the Berlin Congress.<sup>2</sup> The resentment produced by these events in Italy led to the fall of the Cairoli Ministry, which had been too credulous of French assurances; and Depretis took the helm of State. Seeing that Bismarck had confessed his share in encouraging France to take Tunis, Italy's *rapprochement* to Germany might seem to be unnatural. It was so. In truth, her alliance with the Central Powers was based, not on good will to them, but on resentment against France. The Italian Nationalists saw in Austria the former oppressor, and still raised the cry of *Italia irredenta* for the recovery of the Italian districts of Tyrol, Istria, and

<sup>1</sup> It transpired later on that Barthélémy de St. Hilaire did not know of the extent of the aims of the French military party, and that these subsequently gained the day; but this does not absolve the Cabinet and him of bad faith. Later on France fortified Bizerta, in contravention (so it is said) of an understanding with the British Government that no part of that coast should be fortified.

<sup>2</sup> *Politische Geschichte der Gegenwart*, for 1881, p. 176; quoted by Lowe, *Life of Bismarck*, ii., p. 133.

Dalmatia. In January, 1880, we find Bismarck writing: "Italy must not be numbered to-day among the peace-loving and conservative Powers, who must reckon with this fact. . . . We have much more ground to fear that Italy will join our adversaries than to hope that she will unite with us, seeing that we have no more inducements to offer her." <sup>1</sup>

This frame of mind changed after the French acquisition of Tunis.

Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes

should have been the feeling of MM. Waddington and Ferry when Bismarck encouraged them to undertake that easiest but most expensive of conquests. The nineteenth century offers, perhaps, no more successful example of Macchiavellian statecraft. The estrangement of France and Italy postponed at any rate for a whole generation, possibly for the present age, that war of revenge in which up to the spring of 1881 the French might easily have gained the help of Italy. Thenceforth they had to reckon on her hostility. The irony of the situation was enhanced by the fact that the Tunis affair, with the recriminations to which it led, served to bring to power at Paris the very man who could best have marshalled the French people against Germany.

Gambetta was the incarnation of the spirit of revenge. On more than one occasion he had abstained from taking high office in the shifting Ministries of the seventies; and it seems likely that by this calculating coyness he sought to keep his influence intact, not for the petty personal ends which have often been alleged, but rather with a view to the more effective embattling of all the national energies

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages*, etc., iii., p. 291.

against Germany. Good will to England and to the Latin peoples, hostility to the Power which had torn Elsass-Lothringen from France, such was the policy of Gambetta. He had therefore protested, though in vain, against the expedition to Tunis; and now, on his accession to power (November 9, 1881), he found Italy sullenly defiant, while he and his Radical friends could expect no help from the new autocrat of all the Russias. All hope of a war of revenge proved to be futile; and he himself fell from power on January 26, 1882.<sup>1</sup> The year to which he looked forward with high hopes proved to be singularly fatal to the foes of Germany. The armed intervention of Britain in Egypt turned the thoughts of Frenchmen from the Rhine to the Nile. Skobelev, the arch enemy of all things Teutonic, passed away in the autumn; and its closing days witnessed the death of Gambetta at the hands of his mistress.

The resignation of Gambetta having slackened the tension between Germany and France, Bismarck displayed less desire for the alliance of Italy. Latterly, as a move in the German parliamentary game, he had coquetted with the Vatican; and as a result of this off-hand behaviour, Italy was slow in coming to accord with the Central Powers. Nevertheless, her resentment respecting Tunis overcame her annoyance at Bismarck's procedure; and on May 20, 1882, treaties were signed which bound Italy to the Central Powers for a term of five years. Their conditions have not been published, but there are good grounds for thinking that the three allies reciprocally guaranteed the possession of their present territories, agreed to resist attack on the

<sup>1</sup> Seignobos, *A Political History of Contemporary Europe*, i., p. 210 (Eng. ed.).

lands of any one of them, and stipulated the amount of aid to be rendered by each in case of hostilities with France or Russia, or both Powers combined. Subsequent events would seem to show that the Roman Government gained from its northern allies no guarantee whatever for its colonial policy, or for the maintenance of the balance of power in the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup>

Very many Italians have sharply questioned the value of the Triple Alliance to their country. Probably, when the truth comes fully to light, it will be found that the King and his Ministers needed some solid guarantee against the schemes of the Vatican to drive the monarchy from Rome. The relations between the Vatican and the Quirinal were very strained in the year 1882; and the alliance of Italy with Austria removed all fear of the Hapsburgs acting on behalf of the Jesuits and other clerical intriguers. The annoyance with which the clerical party in Italy received the news of the alliance shows that it must have interfered with their schemes. Another explanation is that Italy actually feared an attack from France in 1882 and sought protection from the Central Powers. We may add that on the renewal of the Triple Alliance in 1891, Italy pledged herself to send two corps through Tyrol to fight the French on their eastern frontier if they attacked Germany. But it is said that that clause was omitted from the treaty on its last renewal, in 1902.

The accession of Italy to the Austro-German Alliance gave pause to Russia. The troubles with the Nihilists also indisposed Alexander III. from attempting any rash

<sup>1</sup> For the Triple Alliance see the *Rev. des deux Mondes*, May 1, 1883; also Chiala, *Storia Contemporanea—La Triplice e la Duplice Alleanza* (1898).

adventures, especially in concert with a democratic Republic which changed its Ministers every few months. His hatred of the Republic as the symbol of democracy equalled his distrust of it as a political kaleidoscope; and more than once he rejected the idea of a *rapprochement* to the western Proteus because of "the absence of any personage authorised to assume the responsibility for a treaty of alliance."<sup>1</sup> These were the considerations, doubtless, which led him to dismiss the warlike Ignatieff, and to entrust the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to a hard-headed diplomatist, de Giers (June 12, 1882). His policy was peaceful and decidedly opposed to the Slavophil propaganda of Katkoff, who now for a time lost favour.

For the present, then, Germany was safe. Russia turned her energies against England and achieved the easy and profitable triumphs in Central Asia which nearly brought her to war with the British Government (see Chapter III.).

In the year 1884 Bismarck gained another success in bringing about the signature of a treaty of alliance between the three Empires. It was signed on March 24, 1884, at Berlin, but was not ratified until September, during a meeting of the three Emperors at Skiernewice. M. Élie de Cyon gives its terms as follows: (1) If one of the three contracting parties makes war on a fourth Power, the other two will maintain a benevolent neutrality. (To this Bismarck sought to add a corollary, that if two of them made war on a fourth Power, the third would equally remain neutral; but the Czar is said to have rejected this, in the interests of France.) (2) In case of a conflict in the Balkan Peninsula, the three Powers shall consult their own interests;

<sup>1</sup> Élie de Cyon, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

and in the case of disagreement the third Power shall give a casting vote. (A protocol added here that Austria might annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, and occupy Novi-Bazar.) (3) The former special treaties between Russia and Germany, or Russia and Austria, are annulled. (4) The three Powers will supervise the execution of the terms of the Treaty of Berlin respecting Turkey; and if the Porte allows a fourth Power (evidently England) to enter the Dardanelles, it will incur the hostility of one of the three Powers (Russia). (5) They will not oppose the union of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia "if it comes about by the force of circumstances"; and will not allow Turkey to fortify the Balkan Passes. Finally, by Article 6, they forbid any one of the contracting Powers to occupy the Balkan Principalities. The compact held good only for three years.

If these terms are correctly stated, the treaty was a great triumph for Austria and Germany at the expense of Russia. It is not surprising that the Czar finally broke away from the constraint imposed by the Skiernewice compact. As we have seen, his conduct towards Bulgaria in 1885-86 brought him very near to a conflict with the Central Powers. The mystery is why he ever joined them on terms so disadvantageous. The explanation would seem to be that, like the King of Italy, he felt an alliance with the "conservative" Powers of Central Europe to be some safeguard against the revolutionary elements then so strong in Russia.

In the years 1886-87 that danger became less acute, and the dictates of self-interest in foreign affairs resumed their normal sway. At the beginning of the year 1887 Katkoff regained his influence over the mind of the Czar by con-

vincing him that the troubles in the Balkan Peninsula were fomented by the statesmen of Berlin and Vienna in order to distract his attention from Franco-German affairs. Let Russia and France join hands, said Katkoff in effect, and then Russia would have a free hand in Balkan politics and could lay down the law in European matters generally.

In France the advantage of a Russian alliance was being loudly asserted by General Boulanger—then nearing the zenith of his popularity—as also by that brilliant leader of society, Mme. Adam, and a cluster of satellites in the press. Even de Giers bowed before the idea of the hour, and allowed the newspaper which he inspired, *Le Nord*, to use these remarkable words (February 20, 1887):

“Henceforth Russia will watch the events on the Rhine, and relegates the Eastern Question to the second place. The interests of Russia forbid her, in case of another Franco-German war, observing the same benevolent neutrality which she previously observed. The Cabinet of St. Petersburg will in no case permit a further weakening of France. In order to keep her freedom of action for this case, Russia will avoid all conflict with Austria and England, and will allow events to take their course in Bulgaria.”

Thus, early in the year 1887, the tendency towards that equilibrium of the Powers, which is the great fact of recent European history, began to exercise a sedative effect on Russian policy in Bulgaria and in Central Asia. That year saw the delimitation of the Russo-Afghan border, and the adjustment in Central Asian affairs of a balance corresponding to the equilibrium soon to be reached in European politics. That, too, was the time when Bulgaria began firmly and successfully to assert her

independence and to crush every attempt at a rising on the part of her Russophil officers. This was seen after an attempt which they made at Rustchuk, when Stambuloff condemned nine of them to death. The Russian Government having recalled all its agents from Bulgaria, the task of saving these rebels devolved on the German Consuls, who were then doing duty for Russia. Their efforts were futile, and Katkoff used their failure as a means of poisoning the Czar's mind not only against Germany, but also against de Giers, who had suggested the supervision of Russian interests by German Consuls.<sup>1</sup>

Another incident of the springtide of 1887 kindled the Czar's anger against the Teutons more fiercely and with more reason. On April 20th, a French police commissioner, Schnaebele, was arrested by two German agents or spies on the Alsacian border in a suspiciously brutal manner, and thrown into prison. Far from soothing the profound irritation which this affair produced in France, Bismarck poured oil upon the flames a few days later by a speech which seemed designed to extort from France a declaration of war. That, at least, was the impression produced on the mind of Alexander III., who took the unusual step of sending an autograph letter to the Emperor William I. He, in his turn, without referring the matter to Bismarck, gave orders for the instant release of Schnaebele.<sup>2</sup> Thus the incident closed; but the disagreeable impression which it created ended all chance of renewing the Three Emperors' League. The Skiernewice compact, which had been formed for three years, therefore came to an end.

<sup>1</sup> Élie de Cyon, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Nouvelle Revue* for April 15, 1890, for Cyon's version of the whole affair, which is treated with prudent brevity by Oncken, Blum, and Delbrück.



Already, if we may trust the imperfect information yet available, France and Russia had sought to break up the Triple Alliance. In the closing weeks of 1886 de Giers sought to entice Italy into a compact with Russia with a view to an attack on the Central States (her treaty with them expired in the month of May following), and pointed to Trieste and the Italian districts of Istria as a reward for this treachery. The French Government is also believed to have made similar overtures, holding out the Trentino (the southern part of Tyrol) as the bait. Signor Depretis, true to the policy of the Triple Alliance, repelled these offers—an act of constancy all the more creditable seeing that Bismarck had on more than one occasion shown scant regard for the interests of Italy.

Even now he did little to encourage the King's Government to renew the alliance framed in 1882. Events, however, again brought the Roman Cabinet to seek for support. The Italian enterprise in Abyssinia had long been a drain on the treasury, and the annihilation of a force by those warlike mountaineers on January 26, 1887, sent a thrill of horror through the Peninsula. The internal situation was also far from promising. The breakdown of the attempts at compromise between the monarchy and Pope Leo XIII. revealed the adamant hostility of the Vatican to the King's Government in Rome. A prey to these discouragements, King Umberto and his advisers were willing to renew the Triple Alliance (March, 1887), though on terms no more advantageous than before. Signor Depretis, the chief champion of the alliance, died in July; but Signor Crispi, who thereafter held office, proved to be no less firm in its support. After a visit to Prince Bismarck at his abode of Friedrichsruh, near Hamburg,

the Italian Prime Minister came back a convinced Teuto-phil, and announced that Italy adhered to the Central Powers in order to assure peace to Europe.

Crispi also hinted that the naval support of England might be forthcoming if Italy were seriously threatened; and when the naval preparations at Toulon seemed to portend a raid on the ill-protected dockyard of Spezzia, British warships took up positions at Genoa in order to render help if it were needed. This incident led to a discussion in the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna, owing to a speech made by Signor Chiala at Rome. Mr. Labouchere also, on February 10, 1888, sharply questioned Sir James Fergusson in the House of Commons on the alleged understanding between England and Italy. All information, however, was refused.<sup>1</sup>

Next to nothing, then, is known on the interesting question how far the British Government went in framing an agreement with Italy, and, through her, with the Triple Alliance. We can only conjecture the motives which induced the Salisbury Cabinet to make a strategic turn towards that "conservative" alliance, and yet not definitely join it. The isolation of England proved, in the sequel, to be not only a source of annoyance to the Continental Powers but of weakness to herself, because her statesmen failed to use to the full the potential advantages of their position at the middle of the see-saw. Bismarck's dislike of England was not incurable; he was never a thorough-going "colonial"; and it is probable that the adhesion of England to his league would have inaugurated

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, cccxii., pp. 1180 *et seq.*; Chiala, *La Triplice e la Duplice Alleanza*, app. ii.; Mr. Stillman, *Francesco Crispi* (p. 177), believes in the danger to Spezzia.

a period of mutual good will in politics, colonial policy, and commerce. The abstention of England has in the sequel led German statesmen to show all possible deference to Russia, generally at the expense of British interests.

The importance of this consideration becomes obvious when the dangers of the year 1887 are remembered. The excitement caused in Russia and France by the Rustchuk and Schnaebele affairs, the tension in Germany produced by the drastic proposals of a new Army Bill, and, above all, the prospect of the triumph of Boulangist militarism in France, kept the Continent in a state of tension for many months. In May, Katkoff nearly succeeded in persuading the Czar to dismiss de Giers and adopt a warlike policy, in the belief that a strong Cabinet was about to be formed at Paris with Boulanger as the real motive power. After a long ministerial crisis the proposed ministerial combination broke down; Boulanger was shelved, and the Czar is believed to have sharply rebuked Katkoff for his presumption.<sup>1</sup> This disappointment of his dearest hopes preyed on the health of that brilliant publicist and hastened his end, which occurred on August 1, 1887.

The seed which Katkoff had sown was, however, to bring forth fruit. Despite the temporary discomfiture of the Slavophiles, events tended to draw France and Russia more closely together. The formal statement of Signor Crispi that the Triple Alliance was a great and solid fact would alone have led to some counter move; and all the proofs of the instability of French politics furnished by the Grévy-Wilson scandals could not blind Russian

<sup>1</sup> This version (the usual one) is contested by Cyon, who says that Katkoff's influence over the Czar was undermined by a mean German intrigue.

statesmen to the need of some understanding with a great Power.<sup>1</sup>

Bismarck sought to give the needed hand-grip. In November, 1887, during an interview with the Czar at Berlin, he succeeded in exposing the forgery of some documents concerning Bulgaria which had prejudiced Alexander against him. He followed up this advantage by secretly offering the Cabinet of St. Petersburg a guarantee of German support in case of an attack from Austria; but it does not appear that the Czar placed much trust in the assurance, especially when Bismarck made his rhetorical fanfare of February 6, 1888, in order to ensure the raising of a loan of 28,000,000 marks for buying munitions of war.

That speech stands forth as a landmark in European politics. In a simple, unadorned style the German Chancellor set forth the salient facts of the recent history of his land, showing how often its peace had been disturbed, and deducing the need for constant preparation in a State bordered, as Germany was, by powerful neighbours:—"The pike in the European pool prevent us from becoming carp; but we must fulfil the designs of Providence by making ourselves so strong that the pike can do no more than amuse us." He also traced the course of events which led to the treaties with Austria and Italy, and asserted that by their formation and by the recent publication of the treaty of 1882 with Austria the German Government had not sought in any way to threaten Russia. The present misunderstandings with that Power would doubt-

<sup>1</sup> See the Chauvinist pamphlets *Echec et Mat à la Politique de l'Ennemi de la France*, by "un Russe" (Paris, 1887), and *Nécessité de l'Alliance franco-russe*, by P. Pader (Toulouse, 1888).

less pass away; but seeing that the Russian press had "shown the door to an old, powerful, and effective friend, which we were, we shall not knock at it again."

Bismarck's closing words—"We Germans fear God and nothing else in the world; and it is the fear of God which makes us seek peace and ensue it"—carried the Reichstag with him, with the result that the proposals of the Government were adopted almost unanimously, and Bismarck received an overwhelming ovation from the crowd outside. These days marked the climax of the Chancellor's career and the triumph of the policy which led to the Triple Alliance.

The question, which of the two great hostile groups was the more sincere in its championship of peace principles, must remain one of the riddles of the age. Bismarck had certainly given much provocation to France in the Schnaebele affair; but in the year 1888 the chief danger to the cause of peace came from Boulanger and the Slavophiles of Russia. The Chancellor, having carried through his army proposals, posed as a peacemaker; and Germany for some weeks bent all her thoughts on the struggle between life and death which made up the ninety days' reign of the Emperor Frederick III. Cyon and other French writers have laboured to prove that Bismarck's efforts to prevent his accession to the throne, on the ground that he was a victim of an incurable disease, betokened a desire for immediate war with France.

It appears, however, that the contention of the Chancellor was strictly in accord with one of the fundamental laws of the Empire. His attitude towards France throughout the later phases of the Boulanger affair was coldly "correct," while he manifested the greatest deference

towards the private prejudices of the Czar when the Empress Frederick allowed the proposals of marriage between her daughter and Prince Alexander of Battenberg to be renewed. Knowing the unchangeable hatred of the Czar for the ex-Prince of Bulgaria, Bismarck used all his influence to thwart the proposal, which was defeated by the personal intervention of the present Kaiser.<sup>1</sup> According to our present information, then, German policy was sincerely peaceful, alike in aim and in tone, during the first six months of the year; and the piling up of armaments which then went on from the Urals to the Pyrenees may be regarded as an unconsciously ironical tribute paid by the Continental Powers to the cause of peace.

A change came over the scene when William II. ascended the throne of Germany (June 15, 1888). At once he signalised the event by issuing a proclamation to the army, in which occurred the words: "I swear ever to remember that the eyes of my ancestors look down upon me from the other world, and that I shall one day have to render account to them of the glory and honour of the army." The navy received his salutation on that same day; and not until three days later did a proclamation go forth to his people. Men everywhere remembered that "Frederick the Noble" had first addressed his people, and then his army and navy. The inference was unavoidable that the young Kaiser meant to be a Frederick the Great rather than a "citizen Emperor," as his father had longed to be known. The world has now learnt to discount the utterances of the most impulsive of Hohenzollern rulers; but in those days, when it knew not his complex character,

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages, etc.*, iii., p. 335.

such an army order seemed to portend the advent of another Napoleon.

Not only France but Russia felt some alarm. True, the young Kaiser speedily paid a visit to his relative at St. Petersburg; but it soon appeared that the stolid and very reserved Alexander III. knew not what to make of the versatile personality that now controlled the policy of Central Europe. It was therefore natural that France and Russia should take precautionary measures; and we now know that these were begun in the autumn of that year.

In the first instance, they took the form of loans. A Parisian financier, M. Hoskier, Danish by descent, but French by naturalisation and sympathy, had long desired to use the resources of Paris as a means of cementing friendship, and, if possible, alliance with Russia. For some time he made financial overtures at St. Petersburg, only to find all doors closed against him by German capitalists. But in the spring of the year 1888 the Berlin Bourse had been seized by a panic at the excessive amount of Russian securities held by German houses; large sales took place, and thenceforth it seemed impossible for Russia to raise money at Berlin or Frankfurt except on very hard terms.

Now was the opportunity for which the French houses had been waiting and working. In October, 1888, Hoskier received an invitation to repair to St. Petersburg secretly, in order to consider the taking up of a loan of 500,000,000 francs at 4 per cent., to replace war loans contracted in 1877 at 5 per cent. At once he assured the Russian authorities that his syndicate would accept the offer, and though the German financiers raged and plotted against him, the loan went to Paris. This was the beginning of a series of loans launched by Russia at Paris, and so

successfully that by the year 1894 as much as four milliards of francs (£160,000,000) is said to have been subscribed in that way.<sup>1</sup> Thus the wealth of France enabled Russia to consolidate her debt on easier terms, to undertake strategic railways, to build a new navy, and arm her immense forces with new and improved weapons. It is well known that Russia could not otherwise have ventured on these and other costly enterprises; and one cannot but admire the skill which she showed in making so timely a use of Gallic enthusiasm, as well as the statesmanlike foresight of the French in piling up these armaments on the weakest flank of Germany.

Meanwhile the Boulangist bubble had burst. After his removal from the army on the score of insubordination, *le brav' général* entered into politics, and, to the surprise of all, gained an enormous majority in the election for a district of Paris (January, 1889). It is believed that, had he rallied his supporters and marched against the Elysée, he might have overthrown the parliamentary Republic. But, like Robespierre at the crisis of his career, he did not strike—he discoursed of reason and moderation. For once the authorities took the initiative; and when the new Premier, Tirard, took action against him for treason, he fled to Brussels on the appropriate date of the 1st of April. Thenceforth, the Royalist-Bonapartist-Radical hybrid, known as Boulangism, ceased to scare the world; and its challenging snorts died away in sounds which were finally recognised as convulsive brayings. How far the Slavophiles of Russia had a hand in goading on the creature is not known. Élie de Cyon, writing at a later date, de-

<sup>1</sup> E. Daudet, *Histoire diplomatique de l'Alliance Franco-Russe*, pp. 270-279.



clared that he all along saw through and distrusted Boulanger. Disclaimers of this kind were plentiful in the following years.<sup>1</sup>

After the exposure of that hero of the Boulevards, it was natural that the Czar should decline to make a binding compact with France; and he signalled the isolation of Russia by proposing a toast to the Prince of Montenegro as "the only sincere and faithful friend of Russia." Nevertheless, the dismissal of Bismarck by William II., in March, 1890, brought about a time of strain and friction between Russia and Germany which furthered the prospects of a Franco-Russian *entente*. Thenceforth peace depended on the will of a young autocrat who now and again gave the impression that he was about to draw the sword for the satisfaction of his ancestral *manes*. A sharp and long-continued tariff war between Germany and Russia also embittered the relations between the two Powers.

Rumours of war were widespread in the year 1891. Wild tales were told as to a secret treaty between Germany and Belgium for procuring a passage to the Teutonic hosts through that neutralised kingdom, and thus turning the new eastern fortresses which France had constructed at enormous cost.<sup>2</sup> Parts of northern France were to be the reward of King Leopold's complaisance, and the help of England and Turkey was to be secured by substantial bribes.<sup>3</sup> The whole scheme wears a look of amateurish grandiosity; but, on the principle that there is no smoke

<sup>1</sup> De Cyon, *op. cit.*, pp. 394 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> In the French Chamber of Deputies it was officially stated in 1893, that in two decades France had spent the sum of £614,000,000 on her army and the new fortresses, apart from that on strategic railways and the fleet.

<sup>3</sup> Notovich, *L'Empereur Alexandre III.*, ch. viii.

without fire (which does not always hold good for diplomatic smoke), much alarm was felt at Paris. The renewal of the Triple Alliance in June, 1891, for a term of six years, was followed up a month later by a visit of the Emperor William to England, during which he took occasion at the Guildhall to state his desire "to maintain the historical friendship between these our two nations" (July 10). Balanced though this assertion was by an expression of a hope in the peaceful progress of all peoples, the words sent an imaginative thrill to the banks of the Seine and the Neva.

The outcome of it all was the visit of the French Channel Fleet to Cronstadt at the close of July; and the French statesman M. Flourens asserts that the Czar himself took the initiative in this matter.<sup>1</sup> The fleet received an effusive welcome, and, to the surprise of all Europe, the Emperor visited the flagship of Admiral Gervais and remained uncovered while the band played the national airs of the two nations. Few persons ever expected the autocrat of the East to pay that tribute to the *Marseillaise*. But, in truth, French democracy was then entering on a new phase at home. Politicians of many shades of opinion had begun to cloak themselves with "opportunism"—a conveniently vague term, first employed by Gambetta, but finally used to designate any serviceable compromise between parliamentary rule, autocracy, and flamboyant militarism. The Cronstadt *fêtes* helped on the warping process.

Whether any definite compact was there signed is open to doubt. The *Times* correspondent, writing on July 31st from St. Petersburg, stated that Admiral Gervais had

<sup>1</sup> L. E. Flourens, *Alexandre III.: sa Vie, son Œuvre*, p. 319.

brought with him from Paris a draft of a convention, which was to be considered and thereafter signed by the Russian Ministers for Foreign Affairs, War, and the Navy, but not by the Czar himself until the need for it arose. Probably, then, no alliance was formed, but military and naval conventions were drawn up to serve as bases for common action if an emergency should arise. These agreements were elaborated in conferences held by the Russian generals Vanoffski and Obrucheff with the French generals Saussier, Miribel, and Boisdeffre. A Russian loan was soon afterwards floated at Paris amidst great enthusiasm.

For the present the French had to be satisfied with this exchange of secret assurances and hard cash. The Czar refused to move further, mainly because the scandals connected with the Panama affair once more aroused his fears and disgust. De Cyon states that the degrading revelations which came to light, at the close of 1891 and early in 1892, did more than anything to delay the advent of a definite alliance. The return visit of a Russian squadron to French waters was therefore postponed to the month of October, 1893, when there were wild rejoicings at Toulon. The Czar and President exchanged telegrams, the former referring to "the bonds which unite the two countries."

It appeared for a time that Russia meant to keep her squadron in the Mediterranean; and representations on this subject are known to have been made by England and Italy, which once again drew close together. A British squadron visited Italian ports—an event which seemed to foreshadow the entrance of the Island Power to the Triple Alliance. The Russian fleet, however, left the Mediterranean, and the diplomatic situation remained unchanged. Despite all the passionate wooing of the Gallic race, no

contract of marriage took place during the life of Alexander III. He died on November 1, 1894, and his memory was extolled in many quarters as that of the great peacemaker of the age.

How far he deserved this praise, to which every statesman of the first rank laid claim, is matter for doubt. It is certain that he disliked war on account of the evil results accruing from the Russo-Turkish conflict; but whether his love of peace rested on grounds other than prudential will be questioned by those who remember his savage repression of non-Russian peoples in his Empire, his brutal treatment of the Bulgarians and of their Prince, his underhand intrigues against Servia and Roumania, and the favour which he showed to the commander who violated international law at Panjdeh. That the French should enshrine his memory in phrases to which their literary skill gives a world-wide vogue is natural, seeing that he ended their days of isolation and saved them from the consequences of Boulangism; but it still has to be proved that, apart from the Schnaebele affair, Germany ever sought a quarrel with France during the reign of Alexander III.; and it may finally appear that the Triple Alliance was the genuinely conservative league which saved Europe from the designs of the restless Republic and the exacting egotism of Alexander III.

Another explanation of the Franco-Russian *entente* is fully as tenable as the theory that the Czar based his policy on the seventh beatitude. A careful survey of the whole of that policy in Asia, as well as in Europe, seems to show that he drew near to the Republic in order to bring about an equilibrium in Europe which would enable him to throw his whole weight into the affairs of the Far East.

Russian policy has oscillated now towards the West, now towards the East; but old-fashioned Russians have always deplored entanglement in European affairs, and have pointed to the more hopeful Orient. Even during the pursuit of Napoleon's shattered forces in their retreat from Moscow in 1812, the Russian Commander, Kutusoff, told Sir Robert Wilson that Napoleon's overthrow would benefit, not the world at large, but only England.<sup>1</sup> He failed to do his utmost, largely because he looked forward to peace with France and a renewal of the Russian advance on India.

The belief that England was the enemy came to be increasingly held by leading Russians, especially, of course, after the Crimean War and the Berlin Congress. Russia's true mission, they said, lay in Asia. There, among those ill-compacted races, she could easily build up an empire that never could be firmly founded on tough, recalcitrant Bulgars or warlike Turks. The Triple Alliance having closed the door to Russia on the West, there was the greater temptation to take the other alternative course, that line of least resistance which led towards Afghanistan and Manchuria. The value of an understanding with France was now clear to all. As we have seen, it guarded Russia's exposed frontier in Poland, and poured into the exchequer treasures which speedily took visible form in the Siberian railway, as well as the extensions of the lines leading to Merv and Tashkend.

But this eastern trend of Russian policy can scarcely be called peaceful. The Panjdeh incident (March 29, 1885) would have led any other government than that of Mr. Gladstone to declare war on the aggressor. Events soon turned the gaze of the Russians towards Manchuria, and

<sup>1</sup> *The French Invasion of Russia*, by Sir R. Wilson, p. 234.

the Franco-Russian agreement enabled them to throw their undivided energies in that direction (see Chapter IX.). It was French money which enabled Russia to dominate Manchuria, and, for the time, to overawe Japan. In short, the Dual Alliance peacefully conducted the Muscovites to Port Arthur.

The death of Alexander III. in November, 1894, brought to power a very different personality, kindlier and more generous, but lacking the strength and prudence of the deceased ruler. Nicholas II. had none of that dislike of Western institutions which haunted his father. The way was therefore open for a more binding compact with France, the need for which was emphasised by the events of the years 1894-95 in the Far East. But the manner in which it came about is still but dimly known. Members of the House of Orleans are said to have taken part in the overtures, perhaps with the view of helping on the hypnotising influence which alliance with the autocracy of the East exerts on the democracy of the West.

The Franco-Russian *entente* ripened into an alliance in the year 1895. So, at least, we may judge from the reference to Russia as *notre allié* by the Prime Minister, M. Ribot, in the debate of June 10, 1895. Nicholas II., at the time of his visit to Paris in 1896, proclaimed his close friendship with the Republic; and during the return visit of President Faure to Cronstadt and St. Petersburg he gave an even more significant sign that the two nations were united by something more than sentiment and what Carlyle would have called the cashnexus. On board the French warship *Pothuau* he referred in his farewell speech to the "*nations amies et alliées*" (August 26, 1897).

The treaty has never been made public, but a version of it appeared in the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* of September 21, 1901, and in the Paris paper, *La Liberté*, five days later. Mr. Henry Norman gives the following summary of the information there unofficially communicated. After stating that the treaty contains no direct reference to Germany, he proceeds: "It declares that if either nation is attacked, the other will come to its assistance with the whole of its military and naval forces, and that peace shall only be concluded in concert and by agreement between the two. No other *casus belli* is mentioned, no term is fixed to the duration of the treaty, and the whole instrument consists of only a few clauses." <sup>1</sup>

Obviously France and Russia cannot help one another with all their forces unless the common foe were Germany, or the Triple Alliance as a whole. In that case alone would such a clause be operative. The pressure of France and Russia on the flanks of the German Empire would be terrible; and it is inconceivable that Germany would attack France, knowing that such action would bring the weight of Russia upon her weakest frontier. It is, however, conceivable that the three central allies might deem the strain of an armed peace to be unendurable and attack France or Russia. To such an attack the Dual Alliance would oppose about equal forces, though now hampered by the weakening of the Empire in the Far East.

Another account, also unofficial and discretely vague, was given to the world by a diplomatist at the time when

<sup>1</sup> H. Norman, M.P., *All the Russias*, p. 390 (Heinemann, 1902). See the articles on the alliance as it affects Anglo-French relations by M. de Pressensé in the *Nineteenth Century* for February and November, 1896; also Mr. Spenser Wilkinson's *The Nation's Awakening*, ch. v.

the Armenian outrages had for a time quickened the dull conscience of Christendom.<sup>1</sup> Assuming that the Sick Man of the East was at the point of death, the anonymous writer hinted at the profitable results obtainable by the Continental States if, leaving England out of count, they arranged the Eastern Question *à l'aimable* among themselves. The Dual Alliance, he averred, would not meet the needs of the situation; for it did not contemplate the partition of Turkey or a general war in the East.

"Both parties [France and Russia] have examined the course to be taken in the case of aggression by one or more members of the Triple Alliance; an understanding has been arrived at on the great lines of general policy; but of necessity they did not go further. If the Russian Government could not undertake to place its sword at the service of France with a view to a revision of the Treaty of Frankfurt—a demand, moreover, which France did not make—it cannot claim that France should mobilise her forces to permit it to extend its territory in Europe or in Asia. They know that very well on the banks of the Neva."

To this interesting statement we may add that France and Russia have been at variance on the Eastern Question. Thus, when, in order to press her rightful claims on the Sultan, France determined to coerce him by the seizure of Mitylene, if need be, the Czar's Government is known to have discountenanced this drastic proceeding. Speaking generally, it is open to conjecture whether the Dual Alliance refers to other than European questions. This may be inferred from the following fact. On the announcement of the Anglo-Japanese compact early in 1902, by which

<sup>1</sup> *L'Alliance Franco-Russe devant la Crise Orientale*, par un Diplomate étranger. (Paris, Plon. 1897.)



England agreed to intervene in the Far Eastern Question if another Power helped Russia against Japan, the Governments of St. Petersburg and Paris framed a somewhat similar convention whereby France definitely agreed to take action if Russia were confronted by Japan and a European or American Power in these quarters. No such compact would have been needed if the Franco-Russian alliance had referred to the problems of the Far East.

Another "disclosure" of the early part of 1904 is also noteworthy. The Paris *Figaro* published official documents purporting to prove that the Czar Nicholas II., on being sounded by the French Government at the time of the Fashoda incident, declared his readiness to abide by his engagements in case France took action against Great Britain. The *Figaro* used this as an argument in favour of France actively supporting Russia against Japan, if an appeal came from St. Petersburg. This contention would now meet with little support in France. The events of the Russo-Japanese War and the massacre of workmen in St. Petersburg on January 22, 1905, have visibly strained Franco-Russian relations. This is seen in the following speech of M. Anatole France on February 1, 1905, with respect to his interview with the Premier, M. Combes:

"At the beginning of this war I had heard it said very vaguely that there existed between France and Russia firm and fast engagements, and that, if Russia came to blows with a second Power, France would have to intervene. I asked M. Combes, then Prime Minister, whether anything of the kind existed. M. Combes thought it due to his position not to give a precise answer; but he declared to me in the clearest way that so long as he was Minister we need not fear that our sailors and our soldiers

would be sent to Japan. My own opinion is that this folly is not to be apprehended under any Ministry." (*The Times*, February 3d.)

At present, then, everything tends to show that the Franco-Russian alliance refers solely to European questions and is merely a defensive agreement in view of a possible attack from one or more members of the Triple Alliance. Seeing that the purely defensive character of the latter has always been emphasised, doubts are very naturally expressed in many quarters as to the use of these alliances. The only tangible advantage gained by any one of the five Powers is that Russia has had greater facilities for raising loans in France and in securing her hold on Manchuria. On the other hand, Frenchmen complain that the alliance has entailed an immense financial responsibility, which is dearly bought by the cessation of those irritating frontier incidents of the Schnaebeli type which they had to put up with from Bismarck in the days of their isolation.<sup>1</sup>

Italy also questions the wisdom of her alliance with the Central Powers, which brings no obvious return except in the form of slightly enhanced consideration from her Latin sister. In cultured circles on both sides of the Maritime Alps there is a strong feeling that the present international situation violates racial instincts and tradition; and, as we have already seen, Italy's attitude towards France is far different now from what it was in 1882. It is now practically certain that Italians would not allow the King's Government to fight France in the interests of the Central Powers. Their feelings are quite natural. What

<sup>1</sup> See an article by Jules Simon in the *Contemporary Review*, May, 1894.

have Italians in common with Austrians and Prussians? Little more, we may reply, than French republicans with the subjects of the Czar. In truth both of these alliances rest, not on whole-hearted regard or affection, but on fear and on the compulsion which it exerts.

To this fact we may, perhaps, largely attribute the *malaise* of Europe. The Greek philosopher Empedocles looked on the world as the product of two all-pervading forces, love and hate, acting on blind matter: love brought cognate particles together and held them in union; hate or repulsion kept asunder the unlike or hostile elements. We may use the terms of this old cosmogony in reference to existing political conditions, and assert that these two elemental principles have drawn Europe apart into two hostile masses; with this difference, that the allies for the most part are held together not so much by mutual regard as by hatred of their opposites. From this somewhat sweeping statement we must mark off one exception. There were two allies who came together with the ease which betokens a certain amount of affinity. Thanks to the statesmanlike moderation of Bismarck after Königsgrätz, Austria willingly entered into a close compact with her former rival. At least that was the feeling among the Germans and Magyars of the Dual Monarchy. The Austro-German alliance, it may be predicted, will hold good while the Dual Monarchy exists in its present form; but even in that case fear of Russia is the one great binding force where so much else is centrifugal. If ever the Empire of the Czars should lose its prestige, possibly the two Central Powers would drift apart.

Although there are signs of weakness in both alliances they will doubtless remain standing as long as the need

which called them into being remains. Despite all the efforts made on both sides, the military and naval resources of the two great leagues are approximately equal. In one respect, and in one alone, Europe has benefited from these well-matched efforts. The uneasy truce that has been dignified by the name of peace since the year 1878 results ultimately from the fact that war will involve the conflict of enormous citizen armies of nearly equal strength.

So it has come to this, that in an age when the very conception of Christendom has vanished, and ideal principles have been well-nigh crushed out of life by the pressure of material needs, peace again depends on the once-derided principle of the balance of power. That it should be so is distressing to all who looked to see mankind win its way to a higher level of thought on international affairs. The level of thought in these matters could scarcely be lower than it has been since the Armenian massacres. The collective conscience of Europe is as torpid as it was in the eighteenth century, when weak States were crushed or partitioned, and armed strength came to be the only guarantee of safety.

At the close of this volume we shall glance at some of the influences which the Tantalus toil of the European nations has exerted on the life of our age. It is not for nothing that hundreds of millions of men are ever striving to provide the sinews of war, and that rulers keep those sinews in a state of tension. The result is felt in all the other organs of the body politic. Certainly the governing classes of the Continent must be suffering from atrophy of the humorous instinct if they fail to note the practical nullity of the efforts which they and their subjects have long

put forth. Perhaps some statistical satirist of the twentieth century will assess the economy of the process which requires nearly twelve millions of soldiers for the maintenance of peace in the most enlightened quarter of the globe.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CENTRAL ASIAN QUESTION

"The Germans have reached their day, the English their mid-day, the French their afternoon, the Italians their evening, the Spanish their night; but the Slavs stand on the threshold of the morning."—MADAME NOVIKOFF ("O. K.")—*The Friends and Foes of Russia*.

THE years 1879-85 which witnessed the conclusion of the various questions opened up by the Treaty of Berlin and the formation of the Triple Alliance mark the end of a momentous period in European history. The quarter of a century which followed the Franco-Austrian War of 1859 in Northern Italy will always stand out as one of the most momentous epochs in State-building that the world has ever seen. Italy, Denmark, Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Turkey, assumed their present form. The Christians of the Balkan Peninsula made greater strides towards liberty than they had taken in the previous century. Finally, the new diplomatic grouping of the Powers helped to endow these changes with a permanence which was altogether wanting to the fitful efforts of the period 1815-59. That earlier period was one of feverish impulse and picturesque failure; the two later decades were characterised by stern organisation and prosaic success.

It generally happens to nations as to individuals that a period devoted to recovery from internal disorders is followed by a time of great productive and expansive

power. The introspective epoch gives place to one of practical achievement. Faust gives up his barren speculations and feels his way from thought to action. From "In the beginning was the Word" he wins his way onward through "the Thought" and "the Might" until he re-writes the dictum "In the beginning was the Deed." That is the change which came over Germany and Europe in the years 1850-80. The age of the theorists of the *Vor-Parlament* at Frankfurt gave place to the age of Bismarck. The ideals of Mazzini paled in the garish noonday of the monarchical triumph at Rome.

Alas! too, the age of great achievement, that of the years 1859-85, makes way for a period characterised by satiety, torpor, and an indefinable *malaise*. Europe rests from the generous struggles of the past, and settles down uneasily into a time of veiled hostility and armed peace. Having framed their state systems and covering alliances, the nations no longer give heed to constitutions, rights of man, or duties of man; they plunge into commercialism, and search for new markets. Their attitude now is that of ancient Pistol when he exclaims

"The world's mine oyster,  
Which I with sword will open."

In Europe itself there is little to chronicle in the years 1885-1900, which are singularly dull in regard to political achievement. No popular movement (not even those of the distressed Cretans and Armenians) has aroused enough sympathy to bring it to the goal. The reason for this fact seems to be that the human race, like the individual, is subject to certain alternating moods which may be termed the enthusiastic and the practical; and that, during the

latter phase, the material needs of life are so far exalted at the expense of the higher impulses that small struggling communities receive not a tithe of the sympathy which they would have aroused in more generous times.

The fact need not beget despair. On the contrary, it should inspire the belief that, when the fit passes away, the healthier, nobler mood will once more come; and then the world will pulsate with new life making wholesome use of the wealth previously stored up but not assimilated. It is significant that Gervinus, writing in 1853, spoke of that epoch as showing signs of disenchantment and exhaustion in the political sphere. In reality he was but six years removed from the beginning of an age of constructive activity the like of which has never been seen.

Further, we may point out that the ebb in the tide of human affairs which set in about the year 1885 was due to specific causes operating with varied force on different peoples. First in point of time, at the close of the year 1879, came the decision of Bismarck and of the German Reichstag to abandon the cause of Free Trade in favour of a narrow commercial nationalism. Next came the murder of the Czar Alexander II. (March, 1881), and the grinding down of the reformers and of all alien elements by his stern successor. Thus, the national impulse, which had helped on that of democracy in the previous generation, now lent its strength to the cause of economic, religious, and political reaction in the two greatest of European States.

In other lands that vital force frittered itself away in the frothy rhetoric of Déroulède and the futile prancings of Boulanger, in the gibberings of *Italia Irredenta*, or in the noisy obstruction of Czechs and Parnellites in the parliaments of Vienna and London. Everything proclaimed



that the national principle had spent its force and could now merely turn and wobble until it came to rest.

A curious series of events also served to discredit the party of progress in the constitutional states. Italian politics during the ascendancy of Depretis, Mancini, and Crispi became on the one side a mere scramble for power, on the other a nervous edging away from the gulf of bankruptcy ever yawning in front. France, too, was slow to habituate herself to parliamentary institutions, and her history in the years 1887 to 1893 is largely that of a succession of political scandals and screechy recriminations, from the time of the Grévy-Wilson affair to the loathsome end of the Panama Company. In the United Kingdom the wheels of progress lurched along heavily after the year 1886, when Gladstone made his sudden strategic turn towards the following of Parnell. Thus it came about that the parties of progress found themselves almost helpless or even discredited; and the young giant of Democracy suddenly stooped and shrivelled as if with premature decay.

The causes of this seeming paralysis were not merely political and dynamic: they were also ethical. The fervour of religious faith was waning under the breath of a remorseless criticism and dogmatic materialism. Already, under their influence, the teachers of the earlier age, Carlyle, Tennyson, and Browning, had lost their joyousness and spontaneity; and the characteristic thinkers of the new age were chiefly remarkable for the arid formalism with which they preached the gospel of salvation for the strong and damnation to the weak. The results of the new creed were not long in showing themselves in the political sphere. If the survival of the fittest were the last

word of philosophy, where was the need to struggle on behalf of the weak and oppressed? In that case, it might be better to leave them to the following clutch of the new scientific devil; while those who had charged through to the head of the rout enjoyed themselves with utmost abandon. Such was, and is, the deduction from the new gospel (crude enough, doubtless, in many respects), which has finally petrified in the lordly egotism of Nietzsche and in the unlovely outlines of one or two up-to-date Utopias.

These fashions will have their day. Meanwhile it is the duty of the historian to note that self-sacrifice and heroism have a hard struggle for life in an age which for a time exalted Herbert Spencer to the highest pinnacle of greatness, which still riots in the calculating selfishness of Nietzsche and raves about Omar Khayyám.

Seeing, then, that the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century in Europe were almost barren of great formative movements such as had ennobled the previous decades, we may well leave that over-governed, over-drilled continent weltering in its riches and discontent, its militarism and moral weakness, in order to survey events farther afield which carried on the State-building process to lands as yet chaotic or ill-organised. There, at least, we may chronicle some advance, hampered though it has been by the moral languor or laxity that has warped the action of Europeans in their new spheres.

The transference of human interest from European history to that of Asia and Africa is certainly one of the distinguishing features of the years in question. The scene of great events shifts from the Rhine and the Danube to the Oxus and the Nile. The affairs of Rome, Alsace, and Bulgaria being settled for the present, the passions of great

nations centre on Herat and Candahar, Alexandria and Khartum, the Cameroons, Zanzibar, and Johannesburg, Port Arthur and Korea. The United States, after recovering from the Civil War and completing their work of internal development, enter the lists as a colonising power, and drive forth Spain from two of her historic possessions. Strife becomes keen over the islands of the Pacific. Australia seeks to lay hands on New Guinea, and the European Powers enter into hot discussions over Madagascar, the Carolines, Samoa, and many other isles.

In short, these years saw a repetition of the colonial strifes that marked the latter half of the eighteenth century. Just as Europe, after solving the questions arising out of the religious wars, betook itself to marketing in the waste lands over the seas; so, too, when the impulses arising from the incoming of the principles of democracy and nationality had worn themselves out, the commercial and colonial motive again came uppermost. And, as in the eighteenth century, so, too, after 1880, there was at hand an economic incentive spurring on the Powers to annexation of new lands. France had recurred to protective tariffs in 1870. Germany, under Bismarck, followed suit ten years later; and all the Continental Powers in turn, oppressed by armaments and girt around with hostile tariffs, turned instinctively to the unclaimed territories oversea as life-saving annexes for their own over-stocked industrial centres.

It will be convenient to begin the recital of extra-European events by considering the expansion of Russia and Great Britain in Central Asia. There, it is true, the commercial motive is less prominent than that of political rivalry; and the foregoing remarks apply rather to the

recent history of Africa than to that of Central Asia. But, as the plan of this work is to some extent chronological, it seems better to deal first with events which had their beginning farther back than those which relate to the partition of Africa.

The two great colonising and conquering movements of recent times are those which have proceeded from London and Moscow as starting-points. In comparison with them the story of the enterprise of the Portuguese and Dutch has little more than the interest that clings around an almost vanished past. The halo of romance that hovers over the exploits of Spaniards in the New World has all but faded away. Even the more solid achievements of the gallant sons of France in a later age are of small account when compared with the five mighty commonwealths that bear witness to the strength of the English stock and the adaptability of its institutions, or with the portentous growth of the Russian Empire in Asia.

The methods of expansion of these two great colonial Empires are curiously different; and students of ancient history will recall a similar contrast in the story of the expansion of the Greek and Latin races. The colonial Empire of England has been sown broadcast over the seas by adventurous sailors, the freshness and spontaneity of whose actions recall corresponding traits in the maritime life of Athens. Nursed by the sea, and filled with the love of enterprise and freedom which that element inspires, both peoples sought wider spheres for their commerce, and homes more spacious and wealthy than their narrow cradles offered; but, above all, they longed to found a microcosm of Athens or England, with as little control from the mother-land as might be.

The Russian Empire, on the other hand, somewhat resembles that of Rome in its steady, persistent extension of land boundaries by military and governmental methods. The Czars, like the Consuls and Emperors of Rome, set to work with a definite purpose, and brought to bear on the shifting, restless tribes beyond their borders the pressure of an unchanging policy and of a well-organised administration. Both States relied on discipline and civilisation to overcome animal strength and barbarism; and what they won by the sword, they kept by means of a good system of roads and by military colonies. In brief, while ancient Greece and modern England worked through sailors and traders, Rome and Russia worked through soldiers, road-makers, and proconsuls. The sea powers trusted mainly to individual initiative and civic freedom; the land powers founded their empires on organisation and order. The dominion of the former was sporadic and easily dissolvable; that of the latter was solid, and liable to be destroyed only by some mighty cataclysm. The contrast between them is as old and ineffaceable as that which subsists between the restless sea and the unchanging plain.

While the comparison between England and Athens is incomplete, and at some points fallacious, that between the Czars and the Cæsars is in many ways curiously close and suggestive. As soon as the Roman eagles soared beyond the mighty ring of the Alps and perched securely on the slopes of Gaul and Rhætia, the great Republic had the military advantage of holding the central position as against the mutually hostile tribes of western, central, and eastern Europe. Thanks to that advantage, to her organisation, and to her military colonies, she pushed

forward an ever-widening girdle of empire, finally conferring the blessings of the *pax Romana* on districts as far remote as the Tyne, the lower Rhine and Danube, the Caucasus, and the Pillars of Hercules.

Russia also has used to the full the advantages conferred by a central position, an inflexible policy, and a military-agrarian system well adapted to the needs of the nomadic peoples on her borders. In the fifteenth century, her polity emerged victorious from the long struggle with the Golden Horde of Tartars [I keep the usual spelling, though "Tatars" is the correct form]; and, as the barbarous Mongolians lost their hold on the districts of the middle Volga, the power of the Czars began its forward march, pressing back Asiatics on the east and Poles on the west. In 1556, Ivan, the Terrible, seized Astrakan at the mouth of the Volga, and victoriously held Russia's natural frontiers on the east, the Ural Mountains, and the northern shore of the Caspian Sea. We shall deal in a later chapter with her conquest of Siberia, and need only note here that Muscovite pioneers reached the shores of the northern Pacific as early as the year 1636.

Russia's conquests at the expense of Turks, Circassians, and Persians is a subject alien to this narrative; and the tragic story of the overthrow of Poland at the hand of the three partitioning Powers, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, does not concern us here.

It is, however, needful to observe the means by which she was able to survive the dire perils of her early youth and to develop the colonising and conquering agencies of her maturer years. They may be summed up in the single word, "Cossacks."

The Cossacks are often spoken of as though they were

a race. They are not; they are bands or communities, partly military, partly nomadic or agricultural, as the case may be. They can be traced back to bands of outlaws who in the time of Russia's weakness roamed about on the verge of her settlements, plundering indifferently their Slavonic kinsmen, or the Tartars and Turks farther south. They were the "men of the plain," who had fled from the villages of the Slavs, or (in fewer cases) from the caravans of the Tartars, owing to private feuds, or from love of a freer and more lucrative life than that of the village or the encampment. In this debatable land their numbers increased until, Slavs though they mainly were, they became a menace to the growing power of the Czars. Ivan, the Terrible, sent expeditions against them, transplanted many of their number, and compelled those who remained in the space between the rivers Don and Ural to submit to his authority, and to give military service in time of war in return for rights of pasturage and tillage in the districts thenceforth recognised as their own. Some of them transferred their energies to Asia; and it was a Cossack outlaw, Jermak, who conquered a great part of Siberia. The Russian pioneers, who early penetrated into Siberia or Turkestan, found it possible at a later time to use these children of the plain as a kind of protective belt against the warlike natives. The same use was made of them in the south against Turks. Catharine II. broke the power of the "Zaporoghians" (Cossacks of the Dnieper), and settled large numbers of them on the river Kuban to fight the Circassians.

In short, out of the driftwood and wreckage of their primitive social system the Russians framed a bulwark against the swirling currents of the nomad world outside.

In some respects the Cossacks resemble the roving bands of Saxons and Franks who pushed forward roughly but ceaselessly the boundaries of the Teutonic race.<sup>1</sup> But, whereas those offshoots soon came to have a life of their own, apart from the parent stems, Russia, on the other hand, has known how to keep a hold on her boisterous youth, turning their predatory instincts against her worst neighbours, and using them as hardy irregulars in her wars.

Considering the number of times that the Russian Government crushed the Cossack revolts, broke up their self-made organisation, and transplanted unruly bands to distant parts, their almost invariable loyalty to the central authority is very remarkable. It may be ascribed either to the veneration which they felt for the Czar, to the racial sentiment which dwells within the breast of nearly every Slav, or to their proximity to alien peoples whom they hated as Mohammedans or despised as godless pagans. In any case, the Russian autocracy gained untold advantages from the Cossack fringe on the confines of the Empire.

Some faint conception of the magnitude of that gain may be formed, if, by way of contrast, we try to picture the Teutonic peoples always acting together, even through their distant offshoots; or, again, if by a flight of fancy we can imagine the British Government making a wise use of its old soldiers and the flotsam and jetsam of our cities for the formation of semi-military colonies on the most exposed frontiers of the Empire. That which our senators have done only in the case of the Grahamstown experiment of 1819, Russia has done persistently and successfully with

<sup>1</sup> See Cæsar, *Gallic War*, bk. vi., for an account of the formation, at the tribal meeting, of a roving band.



materials far less promising—a triumph of organisation for which she has received scant credit.

The roving Cossacks have become practically a mounted militia, highly mobile in peace and in war. Free from taxes, and enjoying certain agrarian or pastoral rights in the district which they protect, their position in the State is fully assured. At times the ordinary Russian settlers are turned into Cossacks. Either by that means, or by migration from Russia, or by a process of accretion from among the conquered nomads, their ranks are easily recruited; and the readiness with which Tartars and Turkomans are absorbed into this cheap and effective militia has helped to strengthen Russia alike in peace and war. The source of strength open to her on this side of her social system did not escape the notice of Napoleon—witness his famous remark that within fifty years Europe would be either Republican or Cossack.<sup>1</sup>

The firm organisation which Central Europe gained under the French Emperor's hammer-like blows served to falsify the prophecy; and the stream of Russian conquest, dammed up on the west by the newly consolidated strength of Prussia and Austria, set strongly towards Asia. Pride at her overthrow of the great conqueror in 1812 had quickened the national consciousness of Russia; and besides this praiseworthy motive there was another perhaps equally potent, namely, the covetousness of her ruling class. The memoirs written by her bureaucrats and generals reveal the extravagance, dissipation, and luxury

<sup>1</sup> For the Cossacks, see D. M. Wallace's *Russia*, ii., pp. 80-95; and Vladimir's *Russia on the Pacific*, pp. 46-49. The former points out that their once democratic organisation has vanished under the autocracy; and that their officers, appointed by the Czar, own most of the land, formerly held in common.

of the Court circles. Fashionable society had as its main characteristic a barbaric and ostentatious extravagance, alike in gambling and feasting, in the festivals of the Court or in the scarcely veiled debauchery of its devotees. Baron Löwenstern, who moved in its higher ranks, tells of cases of a license almost incredible to those who have not pried among the garbage of the Court of Catharine II. This recklessness, resulting from the tendency of the Muscovite nature, as of the Muscovite climate, to indulge in extremes, begot an imperious need of large supplies of money; and, ground down as were the serfs on the broad domains of the nobles, the resulting revenues were all too scanty to fill up the financial void created by the urgent needs of St. Petersburg, Gatchina, or Monte Carlo. Larger domains had to be won in order to outvie rivals or stave off bankruptcy; and these new domains could most easily come by foreign conquest.

For an analogous reason, the State itself suffered from land hunger. Its public service was no less corrupt than inefficient. Large sums frequently vanished, no one knew whither; but one infallible cure for bankruptcy was always at hand, namely, conquests over Poles, Turks, Circassians, or Tartars. To this Catharine II. had looked when she instituted the vicious practice of paying the nobles for their services at Court; and during her long career of conquest she greatly developed the old Muscovite system of meeting the costs of war out of the domains of the vanquished, besides richly dowering the crown, and her generals and favoured courtiers. One of the Russian Ministers, referring to the notorious fact that his Government made war for the sake of booty as well as glory, said to a Frenchman, "We have remained somewhat Asiatic

in that respect.”<sup>1</sup> It is not always that a Minister reveals so frankly the motives that help to mould the policy of a great State.

The predatory instinct, once acquired, does not readily pass away. Alexander I. gratified it by forays in Circassia, even at the time when he was face to face with the might of the great Napoleon; and after the fall of the latter, Russia pushed on her confines in Georgia until they touched those of Persia. Under Nicholas I. little territory was added except the Kuban coast on the Black Sea, Erivan to the south of Georgia, and part of the Kirghiz lands in Turkestan.

The reason for this quiescence was that almost up to the verge of the Crimean War Nicholas hoped to come to an understanding with England respecting an eventual partition of the Turkish Empire, Austria also gaining a share of the spoils. With the aim of baiting these proposals, he offered, during his visit to London in 1844, to refrain from any movement against the Khanates of Central Asia, concerning which British susceptibilities were becoming keen. His Chancellor, Count Nesselrode, embodied these proposals in an important memorandum, containing a promise that Russia would leave the Khanates of Turkestan as a neutral zone in order to keep the Russian and British possessions in Asia “from dangerous contact.”<sup>2</sup>

For reasons which we need not detail, British Ministers rejected these overtures, and by degrees England entered upon the task of defending the Sultan’s dominions, largely on the assumption that they formed a necessary bulwark

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Vandal, *Napoléon I. et Alexandre*, i., p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted on p. 14 of *A Diplomatic Study on the Crimean War*, issued by the Russian Foreign Office, and attributed to Baron Jomini (Russian edition, 1879; English edition, 1882).

of her Indian Empire. It is not our purpose to criticise British policy at that time. We merely call attention to the fact that there seemed to be a prospect of a friendly understanding with Russia respecting Turkey, Asia Minor, Egypt, and Central Asia; and that the British Government decided to maintain the integrity of Turkey by attacking the power which seemed about to impugn it. As a result, Turkey secured a new lease of life by the Crimean War, while Alexander II. deemed himself entirely free to press on Asiatic conquests from which his father had refrained. Thus, the two great expanding Powers entered anew on that course of rivalry in Asia which has never ceased, and which forms to-day the sole barrier to a good understanding between them.

After the Crimean War circumstances favoured the advance of the Russian arms. England, busied with the Sepoy mutiny in India, cared little what became of the rival Khans of Turkestan; and Lord Lawrence, Governor-General of India in 1863-69, enunciated the soothing doctrine that "Russia might prove a safer neighbour than the wild tribes of Central Asia." The Czar's emissaries therefore had easy work in fomenting the strifes that constantly arose in Bokhara, Khiva, and Tashkend, with the result that in 1864 the last-named was easily acquired by Russia. We may add here that Tashkend is now an important railway centre in the Russian Central Asian line, and that large stores of food and material are there accumulated, which may be utilised in case Russia makes a move against Afghanistan or Northern India.

In 1868 an outbreak of Mohammedan fanaticism in Bokhara brought the Ameer of that town into collision with the Russians, who thereupon succeeded in taking

Samarcand. The capital of the Empire of Tamerlane, "the scourge of Asia," now sank to the level of an outpost of Russian power, and ultimately to that of a mart for cotton. The Khan of Bokhara fell into a position of complete subservience, and ceded to the conquerors the whole of his province of Samarcand.<sup>1</sup>

It is believed that the annexation of Samarcand was contrary to the intentions of the Czar. Alexander II. was a friend of peace; and he had no desire to push forward his frontiers to the verge of Afghanistan, where friction would probably ensue with the British Government. Already he had sought to allay the irritation prevalent in Russophobic circles in England. In November, 1864, his Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff, issued a circular setting forth the causes that impelled the Russians on their forward march. It was impossible, he said, to keep peace with uncivilised and predatory tribes on their frontiers. Russia must press on until she came into touch with a state whose authority would guarantee order on the boundaries. The argument was a strong one; and it may readily be granted that good government, civilisation, and commerce have benefited by the extension of the *pax Russica* over the slave-hunting Turkomans and the inert tribes of Siberia.

Nevertheless, as Gortchakoff's circular expressed the intention of refraining from conquest for the sake of conquest, the irritation in England became very great when the conquest of Tashkend, and thereafter of Samarcand,

<sup>1</sup> For an account of Samarcand and Bokhara, see *Russia in Central Asia*, by Hon. G. (Lord) Curzon (1889); A. Vambéry, *Travels in Central Asia* (1867-68); Rev. H. Lansdell, *Russian Central Asia*, 2 vols. (1885); E. Schuyler, *Journey in Russian Turkestan*, etc., 2 vols. (1876); E. O'Donovan, *The Merv Oasis*, 2 vols. (1883).

was ascribed, apparently on good grounds, to the ambition of the Russian commanders, Tcherniaeff and Kaufmann respectively. On the news of the capture of Samarcand reaching London, the Russian Ambassador hastened to assure the British Cabinet that his master did not intend to retain his conquest. Nevertheless, it was retained. The doctrine of political necessity proved to be as expansive as Russia's boundaries; and, after the rapid growth of the Indian Empire under Lord Dalhousie, the British Government could not deny the force of the plea.

This mighty stride forward brought Russia to the northern bounds of Afghanistan, a land which was thenceforth to be the central knot of diplomatic problems of vast magnitude. It will therefore be well, in beginning our survey of a question which was to test the efficacy of autocracy and democracy in international affairs, to gain some notion of the physical and political conditions of the life of that people.

As generally happens in a mountainous region in the midst of a great continent, their country exhibits various strata of conquest and settlement. The northern district, sloping towards Turkestan, is inhabited mainly by Turkomans who have not yet given up their roving habits. The rugged hill country bordering on the Punjab is held by Pathans and Ghilzais, who are said by some to be of the same stock as the Afghans. On the other hand, a well-marked local legend identifies the Afghans proper with the lost ten tribes of Israel; and those who love to speculate on that elusive and delusive subject may long use their ingenuity in speculating whether the oft-quoted text as to the chosen people possessing the gates of their enemies

is more applicable to the sea-faring and sea-holding Anglo-Saxons or to the pass-holding Afghans.

That elevated plateau, ridged with lofty mountains and furrowed with long clefts, has seen Turkomans, Persians, and many other races sweep over it; and the mixture of these and other races, perhaps including errant Hebrews, has there acquired the sturdiness, tenacity, and clannishness that mark the fragments of three nations clustering together in the Alpine valleys; while it retains the turbulence and fierceness of a full-blooded Asiatic stock. The Afghan problem is complicated by these local differences and rivalries; the north cohering with the Turkomans, Herat and the west having many affinities and interests in common with Persia, Candahar being influenced by Baluchistan, while the hill tribes of the north-east bristle with local peculiarities and aboriginal savagery. These districts can be welded together only by the will of a great ruler or in the white heat of religious fanaticism; and while Moslem fury sometimes unites all the Afghan clans, the Moslem marriage customs result fully as often in a superfluity of royal heirs, which gives rein to all the forces that make for disruption. Afghanistan is a hornet's nest; and yet, as we shall see presently, owing to geographical and strategical reasons, it cannot be left severely alone. The people are to the last degree clannish, and nothing but the grinding pressure of two mighty Empires has endowed them with political solidarity.

It is not surprising that British statesmen long sought to avoid all responsibility for the internal affairs of such a land. As we have seen, the theory which found favour with Lord Lawrence was that of intervening as little as possible in the affairs of States bordering on India, a policy

which was termed "masterly inactivity" by the late Mr. J. W. S. Wyllie. It was the outcome of the experience gained in the years 1839-42, when, after alienating Dost Mohammed, the Ameer of Afghanistan, by its coolness, the Indian Government rushed to the other extreme and invaded the country in order to tear him from the arms of the more effusive Russians.

The results are well known. Overweening confidence and military incapacity finally led to the worst disaster that befell a British army during the nineteenth century, only one officer escaping from among the 4500 troops and 12,000 camp followers who sought to cut their way back through the Khyber Pass.<sup>1</sup> A policy of non-intervention in the affairs of so fickle and savage a people naturally ensued, and was stoutly maintained by Lords Canning, Elgin, and Lawrence, who held sway during and after the great storm of the Indian Mutiny. The worth of that theory of conduct came to be tested in 1863, on the occasion of the death of Dost Mohammed, who had latterly recovered Herat from Persia, and brought nearly the whole of the Afghan clans under his sway. He had been our friend during the Mutiny, when his hostility might readily have turned the wavering scales of war; and he looked for some tangible return for his loyal behaviour in preventing the attempt of some of his restless tribesmen to recover the once Afghan city of Peshawur.

To his surprise and disgust he met with no return whatever, even in a matter which most nearly concerned his dynasty and the future of Afghanistan. As generally happens with Moslem rulers, the aged Ameer occupied his declining days with seeking to provide against the troubles

<sup>1</sup> Sir J. W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan*, 5 vols. (1851-78).



that naturally resulted from the oriental profusion of his marriages. Dost Mohammed's quiver was blessed with the patriarchal equipment of sixteen sons—most of them stalwart, warlike, and ambitious. Eleven of them limited their desires to parts of Afghanistan, but five of them aspired to rule over all the tribes that go to make up that seething medley. Of these, Shere Ali was the third in age but the first in capacity, if not in prowess. Moreover, he was the favourite son of Dost Mohammed; but where rival mothers and rival tribes were concerned, none could foresee the issue of the pending conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Dost Mohammed sought to avert it by gaining the effective support of the Indian Government for his Benjamín. He pleaded in vain. Lord Canning, Governor-General of India at the time of the Mutiny, recognised Shere Ali as heir apparent, but declined to give any promise of support either in arms or money. Even after the Mutiny was crushed, Lord Canning and his successor, Lord Elgin, adhered to the former decision, refusing even a grant of money and rifles for which father and son pleaded.

As we have said, Dost Mohammed died in 1863; but even when Shere Ali was face to face with formidable family schisms and a widespread revolt, Lord Lawrence clung to the policy of recognising only "*de facto* powers," that is, powers which actually existed and could assert their authority. All that he offered was to receive Shere Ali in conference, and give him good advice; but he would only recognise him as Ameer of Afghanistan if he could prevail over his brothers and their tribesmen. He summed it up in this official letter of April 17, 1866, sent to the Governor of the Punjab:

<sup>1</sup> G. B. Malleson, *History of Afghanistan*, p. 421.

"It should be our policy to show clearly that we will not interfere in the struggle, that we will not aid either party, that we will leave the Afghans to settle their own quarrels, and that we are willing to be on terms of amity and goodwill with the nation and with their rulers *de facto*. Suitable opportunities can be taken to declare that these are the principles which will guide our policy; and it is the belief of the Governor-General that such a policy will in the end be appreciated."<sup>1</sup>

The Afghans did not appreciate it. Shere Ali protested that it placed a premium on revolt; he also complained that the Viceroy not only gave him no help, but even recognised his rival, Ufzul, when the latter captured Cabul. After the death of Ufzul and the assumption of authority at Cabul by a third brother, Azam, Shere Ali by a sudden and desperate attempt drove his rival from Cabul (September 8, 1868) and practically ended the schisms and strifes which for five years had rent Afghanistan in twain. Then, but then only, did Lord Lawrence consent to recognise him as Ameer of the whole land, and furnish him with £60,000 and a supply of arms. An act which, five years before, would probably have ensured the speedy triumph of Shere Ali and his lasting gratitude to Great Britain, now laid him under no sense of obligation.<sup>2</sup> He might have

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), p. 10. For a defence of this policy of "masterly inactivity," see Mr. Bosworth Smith's *Life of Lord Lawrence*, ii., pp. 570-590; also Mr. J. W. S. Wyllie's *Essays on the External Policy of India*.

<sup>2</sup> The late Duke of Argyll in his *Eastern Question* (ii., p. 42) cited the fact of this offer of money and arms as a proof that Lord Lawrence was not wedded to the theory of "masterly inactivity," and stated that the gift helped Shere Ali to complete his success. It is clear, however, that Lord Lawrence waited to see whether that success was well assured before the offer was made.

The Duke of Argyll proves one thing, that the action of Lord

replied to Lord Lawrence with the ironical question with which Dr. Johnson declined Lord Chesterfield's belated offer of patronage: "Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help?"

Moreover, there is every reason to think that Shere Ali with the proneness of Orientals to refer all actions to the most elemental motives, attributed the change of front at Calcutta solely to fear. That was the time when the Russian capture of Samarcand cowed the Khan of Bokhara and sent a thrill through Central Asia. In the political psychology of the Afghans, the tardy arrival at Cabul of presents from India argued little friendship for Shere Ali, but great dread of the conquering Muscovites.

Such, then, was the policy of "masterly inactivity" in 1863-68, cheap for India, but excessively costly for Afghanistan. Lord Lawrence rendered incalculable services to India before and during the course of the Mutiny, but his conduct towards Shere Ali is certainly open to criticism. The late Duke of Argyll, Secretary of State for India in the Gladstone Ministry (1868-74), supported it in his work, *The Eastern Question*, on the ground that the Anglo-Afghan treaty of 1855 pledged the British not to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> But uncalled for interference is one thing; to refuse even a slight measure of help to an

Lawrence in September 1868 was not due to Sir Henry Rawlinson's despatch from London (dated July 20, 1868) in favour of more vigorous action. It was due to Lawrence's perception of the change brought about by Russian action in the Khanate of Bokhara, near the Afghan border.

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Argyll, *op. cit.* ii., p. 226 (London, 1879). For the treaty, see Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), p. 1.

ally, who begs it as a return for most valuable services, is quite another thing.

Moreover, the Viceroy himself was brought by the stern logic of events implicitly to give up his policy. In one of his last official despatches, written on January 4, 1869, he recognised the gain to Russia that must accrue from our adherence to a merely passive policy in Central Asian affairs. He suggested that we should come to a "clear understanding with the Court of St. Petersburg as to its projects and designs in Central Asia, and that it might be given to understand in firm but courteous language, that it cannot be permitted to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan, or in those of any State which lies contiguous to our frontier."

This sentence tacitly implies a change of front; for any prohibition to Russia to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan virtually involved Britain's claim to exercise some degree of suzerainty in that land. The way therefore seemed open for a new departure, especially as the new Governor-General, Lord Mayo, was thought to favour the more vigorous ideas latterly prevalent at Westminster. But when Shere Ali met the new Viceroy in a splendid Durbar at Umballa (March, 1869) and formulated his requests for effective British support, in case of need, they were, in the main, refused.<sup>1</sup>

We may here use the words in which the late Duke of Argyll summed up the wishes of the Ameer and the replies of Lord Mayo:

"He [the Ameer] wanted to have an unconditional treaty, offensive and defensive. He wanted to have a

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. W. Hunter, *The Earl of Mayo*, p. 125 (Oxford, 1891); the Duke of Argyll, *op. cit.*, ii., p. 252.

fixed subsidy. He wanted to have a dynastic guarantee. He would have liked sometimes to get the loan of English officers to drill his troops, or to construct his forts—provided they retired the moment they had done this work for him. On the other hand, officers ‘resident’ in his country as political agents of the British Government were his abhorrence.”

Lord Mayo’s replies, or pledges, were virtually as follows:

“The first pledge,” says the Duke of Argyll, “was that of non-interference in his [the Ameer’s] affairs. The second pledge was that ‘we would support his independence.’ The third pledge was ‘that we would not force European officers, or residents, upon him against his wish.’”<sup>1</sup>

There seems to have been no hopeless contrariety between the views of the Ameer and the Viceroy save in one matter that will be noted presently. It is also of interest to learn from the Duke’s narrative, which claims to be official in substance, however partisan it may be in form, that there was no difference of opinion on this important subject between Lord Mayo and the Gladstone Ministry, which came to power shortly after his departure for India. The new Viceroy summed up his views in the following sentence, written to the Duke of Argyll: “The safe course lies in watchfulness, and friendly intercourse with neighbouring tribes.”

Apparently, then, there was a fair chance of arriving at an agreement with the Ameer. But the understanding broke down on the question of the amount of support to be accorded to Shere Ali’s dynasty. That ruler wished for an important modification of the Anglo-Afghan treaty of

<sup>1</sup> Argyll, *op. cit.*, i. Preface, pp. xxiii.–xxvi.

1855, which had bound his father to close friendship with the old company without binding the company to intervene in his favour. That, said Shere Ali, was a "dry friendship." He wanted a friendship more fruitful than that of the years 1863-67, and a direct support to his dynasty whenever he claimed it. The utmost concession that Lord Mayo would grant was that the British Government would "view with severe displeasure any attempt to disturb your position as ruler of Cabul, and rekindle civil war."<sup>1</sup>

It seems that Shere Ali thought lightly of Britain's "displeasure" for he departed ill at ease. Not even the occasional presents of money and weapons that found their way from Calcutta to Cabul could therefore keep his thoughts from turning northwards towards Russia. At Umballa he had said little about that power; and the Viceroy had very wisely repressed any feelings of anxiety that he may have had on that score. Possibly the strength and cheeriness of Lord Mayo's personality would have helped to assuage the Ameer's wounded feelings; but that genial Irishman fell under the dagger of a fanatic during a tour in the Andaman Islands (February, 1872). His death was a serious event. Shere Ali cherished towards him feelings which he did not extend to his successor, Lord Northbrook (1872-76).

Yet, during that vice-royalty, the diplomatic action of Great Britain secured for the Ameer the recognition of his claims over the northern part of Afghanistan, as far as the banks of the upper Oxus. In the years 1870-72 Russia stoutly contested those claims, but finally withdrew them, the Emperor declaring at the close of the latter year "that

<sup>1</sup> Argyll, *op. cit.*, ii., p. 263.

such a question should not be a cause of difference between the two countries and he was determined it should not be so." It is further noteworthy that Russian official communications more than once referred to the Ameer of Afghanistan as being "under the protection of the Indian Government."<sup>1</sup>

These signal services of British diplomacy counted for little at Cabul in comparison with the question of the dynastic guarantee which we persistently withheld. In the spring of 1873, when matters relating to the Afghan-Persian frontier had to be adjusted, the Ameer sent his Prime Minister to Simla with the intention of using every diplomatic means for the extortion of that long-delayed boon.

The time seemed to favour his design. Apart from the Persian boundary questions (which were settled in a manner displeasing to the Ameer), trouble loomed ahead in Central Asia. The Russians were advancing on Khiva; and the Afghan statesman, during his stay at Simla, sought to intimidate Lord Northbrook by parading this fact. He pointed out that Russia would easily conquer Khiva and then would capture Merv, near the western frontier of Afghanistan "either in the current year or the next." Equally obvious was his aim in insisting that "the interests of the Afghan and English Governments are identical," and that "the border of Afghanistan is in truth the border of India." These were ingenious ways of working his intrenchments up to the hitherto inaccessible citadel of Indian border policy. The news of the Russian advance on Khiva lent strength to his argument.

<sup>1</sup> Argyll, *op. cit.*, ii., pp. 289, 292. For the Czar's assurance that "extension of territory" was "extension of weakness," see Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), p. 101.

Yet, when he came to the question of the guarantee of Shere Ali's dynasty, he again met with a rebuff. In truth, Lord Northbrook and his advisers saw that the Ameer was seeking to frighten them about Russia in order to improve his own family prospects in Afghanistan; and, paying too much attention, perhaps, to the Oriental artfulness of the method of request, and too little to the importance of the questions then at stake, he decided to meet the Ameer in regard to non-essentials, though he failed to satisfy him on the one thing held to be needful at the palace of Cabul.

Anxious, however, to consult the Home Government on a matter of such importance, now that the Russians were known to be at Khiva, Lord Northbrook telegraphed to the Duke of Argyll on July 24, 1873:

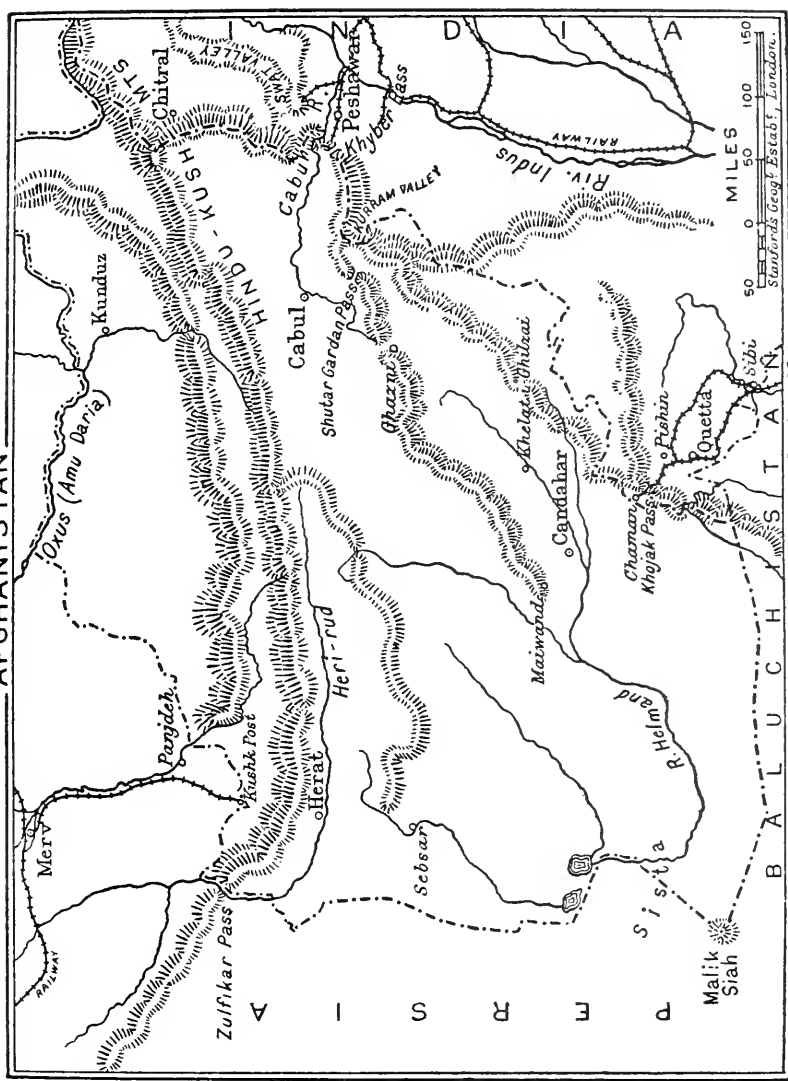
"Ameer of Cabul alarmed at Russian progress, dissatisfied with general assurance, and anxious to know how far he may rely on our help if invaded. I propose assuring him that if he unreservedly accepts and acts on our advice in all external relations, we will help him with money, arms, and troops, if necessary, to expel unprovoked aggression. We to be the judge of the necessity. Answer by telegraph quickly."

The Gladstone Ministry was here at the parting of the ways. The Ameer asked them to form an alliance on equal terms. They refused, believing, as it seems, that they could keep to the old one-sided arrangement of 1855, whereby the Ameer promised effective help to the Indian Government, if need be, and gained only friendly assurance in return. The Duke of Argyll telegraphed in reply on July 26th:

"Cabinet thinks you should inform Ameer that we do not at all share his alarm, and consider there is no cause



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for it; but you may assure him we shall maintain our settled policy in favour of Afghanistan if he abides by our advice in external affairs.”<sup>1</sup>

This answer, together with a present of £100,000 and 20,000 rifles, was all that the Ameer gained; his own shrewd sense had shown him long before that Britain must in any case defend Afghanistan against Russia. What he wanted was an official recognition of his own personal position as ruler, while he acted, so to speak, as the “Count of the Marches” of India. The Gladstone Government held out no hopes of assuring the future of their *Markgraf* or of his children after him. The remembrance of the disaster in the Khyber Pass in 1841 haunted them, as it had done their predecessors, like a ghost, and scared them from the course of action which might probably have led to the conclusion of a close offensive and defensive alliance between India and Afghanistan.

Such a consummation was devoutly to be hoped for in view of events which had transpired in Central Asia. Khiva had been captured by the Russians. This Khanate intervened between Bokhara and the Caspian Sea, which the Russians used as their base of operations on the west. The plea of necessity was again put forward, and it might have been urged as forcibly on geographical and strategic grounds as on the causes that were alleged for the rupture. They consisted mainly of the frontier incidents that are

<sup>1</sup> Argyll, *op. cit.*, ii., 331. The Gladstone Cabinet clearly weakened Lord Northbrook's original proposal, and must therefore bear a large share of responsibility for the alienation of the Ameer which soon ensued. The Duke succeeded in showing up many inaccuracies in the versions of these events afterwards given by Lord Lytton and Lord Cranbrook; but he was seemingly quite unconscious of the consequences resulting from adherence to an outworn theory.

went to occur with restless, uncivilised neighbours. The Czar's Government also accused the Khivans of holding some Russian subjects in captivity, and of breaking their treaty of 1842 with Russia by helping the Khirgiz horde in a recent revolt against their new masters.

Russia soon had ready three columns, which were to converge on Khiva: one was stationed on the river Ural, a second at the rising port of Krasnovodsk on the Caspian Sea, and a third, under General Kaufmann, at Tashkend. So well were their operations timed that, though the distances to be traversed varied from 480 to 840 miles, in parts over a waterless desert, yet the three chief forces arrived almost simultaneously at Khiva and met with the merest show of resistance (June, 1873). Setting the young Khan on the throne of his father, they took from him his ancestral lands on the right bank of the Amu Daria (Oxus) and imposed on him a crushing war indemnity of 2,200,000 roubles, which assured his entire dependence on his new creditors. They further secured their hold on these diminished territories by erecting two forts on the river.<sup>1</sup> The Czar's Government was content with assuring its hold upon Khiva, without annexing the Khanate outright, seeing that it had disclaimed any such intention.<sup>2</sup> All the same, Russia was now mistress of nearly the whole of Central Asia; and the advance of roads and railways portended further conquests at the expense of Persia and the few remaining Turkoman tribes.

In order to estimate the importance of these facts, it

<sup>1</sup> J. Popowski, *The Rival Powers in Central Asia*, p. 47 (Eng. edit.); A. Vambéry, *The Coming Struggle for India*, p. 21; A. R. Colquhoun, *Russia against India*, pp. 24-26; Lavissee and Rambaud, *Histoire Générale*, xii., pp. 793-794.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), p. 101.

must be remembered that the teachings of geography and history concur in showing the practicability of an invasion of India from Central Asia. Touching first the geographical facts, we may point out that India and Afghanistan stand in somewhat the same relation to the Asiatic continent that Italy and Switzerland hold to that of Europe. The rich lands and soft climate of both peninsulas have always been an irresistible attraction to the dwellers among the more barren mountains and plains of the North; and the lie of the land on the borders of both of these seeming Eldorados favours the advance of more virile peoples in their search for more genial conditions of life. Nature, which enervates the defenders in their sultry plains, by her rigorous training imparts a touch of the wolf to the mountaineers or plain-dwellers of the North; and her guides (rivers and streams) conduct the hardy seekers for the sun by easy routes up to the final mountain barriers. Finally, those barriers, the Alps and the Hindu Koosh, are notched by passes that are practicable for large armies, as has been seen now and again from the times of Alexander the Great and Hannibal to those of Nadir Shah and Napoleon.

In these conditions, physical and climatic, is to be found the reason for the success that has so often attended the invasions of Italy and India. Only when the Romans organised all the forces of their peninsula and the fresh young life beyond, were the defensive powers of Italy equal to her fatally attractive powers. Only when Britain undertook the defence of India, could her peoples feel sure of holding the North-west against the restless Pathans and Afghans; and the situation was wholly changed when a great military Empire pushed its power to the river-gates of Afghanistan.

The friendship of the Ameer was now a matter of vital concern; and yet, as we have seen, Lord Northbrook alienated him, firstly, by giving an unfavourable verdict in regard to the Persian boundary in the district of Seistan, and still more so by refusing to grant the long-wished-for guaranty of his dynasty.

The year 1873 marks a fatal turning-point in Anglo-Afghan relations. Yakub Khan told Lord Roberts at Cabul in 1879 that his father, Shere Ali, had been thoroughly disgusted with Lord Northbrook in 1873, "and at once made overtures to the Russians, with whom constant intercourse had since been kept up."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, all who are familiar with the events preceding the first Afghan War (1839-42) can now see that events were fast drifting into a position dangerously like that which led Dost Mohammed to throw himself into the arms of Russia. At that time, also, the Afghan ruler had sought to gain the best possible terms for himself and his dynasty from the two rivals; and, finding that the Russian promises were far more alluring than those emanating from Calcutta, he went over to the Muscovites. At bottom that had been the determining cause of the first Afghan War, and affairs were once more beginning to revolve in the same vicious circle. Looking back on the events leading up to the second Afghan War, we can now see that a frank compliance with the demands of Shere Ali would have been far less costly than the non-committal policy which in 1873 alienated him. Outwardly he posed as the aggrieved but still faithful friend. In reality he was looking northwards for the personal guaranty which never came from Calcutta.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Roberts, *Forty-one Years in India*, ii., p. 247; also *Life of Abdur Rahman*, by Mohammed Khan, 2 vols. (1900), i., p. 149.

It should, however, be stated that up to the time of the fall of the Gladstone Ministry (February, 1874), Russia seemed to have no desire to meddle in Afghan affairs. The Russian Note of January 21, 1874, stated that the Imperial Government "continued to consider Afghanistan as entirely beyond its sphere of action."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, that declaration inspired little confidence. The Russophobes, headed by Sir Henry Rawlinson and Sir Bartle Frere, could reply that they distrusted Russian disclaimers concerning Afghanistan, when the plea of necessity had so frequently and so speedily relegated to oblivion the earlier "assurances of intention."

Such was the state of affairs when, in February, 1874, Disraeli came to power at Westminster, with Lord Salisbury as Secretary of State for India. The new Ministry soon showed the desire to adopt a more spirited foreign policy than their predecessors, who had fretted public opinion by their numerous acts of complaisance or surrender. Russia soon gave cause for complaint. In June, 1874, the Governor of the trans-Caspian province issued a circular, warning the nomad Turkomans of the Persian borderlands against raiding; it applied to tribes inhabiting districts within what were considered to be the northern boundaries of Persia. This seemed to contravene the assurances previously given by Russia that she would not extend her possessions in the southern part of Central Asia.<sup>2</sup> It also foreshadowed another stride forward at the expense of the Turkoman districts both of Persia and Afghanistan.

<sup>1</sup> Argyll, *Eastern Question*, ii., p. 347. See, however, the letters that passed between General Kaufmann, Governor of Turkestan, and Cabul in 1870-72, in Parl. Papers, Central Asia, No. 1 (1881), pp. 2-10.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), p. 107.

As no sufficient disclaimer appeared, the London partisans of the Indian "forward policy" sought to induce Lord Derby and Lord Salisbury to take precautionary measures. Their advice was summed up in the note of January 11, 1875, written by that charming man and able administrator, Sir Bartle Frere. Its chief practical recommendation was, firstly, the despatch of British officers to act as political agents at Cabul, Candahar, and Herat; and, secondly, the occupation of the commanding position of Quetta, in Baluchistan, as an outpost commanding the chief line of advance from Central Asia into India.<sup>1</sup>

This note soon gained the ear of the Cabinet, and on January 22, 1875, Lord Salisbury urged Lord Northbrook to take measures to procure the assent of the Ameer to the establishment of British officers at Candahar and Herat (not at Cabul).<sup>2</sup> The request placed Lord Northbrook in an embarrassing position, seeing that he knew full well the great reluctance of the Ameer at all times to receive any British Mission. On examining the evidence as to the Ameer's objection to receive British residents the Viceroy found it to be very strong, while there is ground for thinking that ministers and officials in London either ignored it or sought to minimise its importance. The pressure which they brought to bear on Lord Northbrook was one of the causes that led to his resignation (February, 1876). He believed that he was in honour bound by the promise given to the Ameer at the Umballa Conference not to impose a British resident on him against his will.

<sup>1</sup> General Jacob had long before advocated the occupation of this strong flanking position. It was supported by Sir C. Dilke in his *Greater Britain* (1867).

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pp. 128-129.

He was succeeded by a man of marked personality, Lord Lytton. The only son of the celebrated novelist, he inherited decided literary gifts, especially an unusual facility of expression both in speech and writing, in prose and verse. Any tendency to redundance in speech is generally counted unfavourable to advancement in diplomatic circles, where Talleyrand's *mot* as to language being a means of *concealing* thought still finds favour. Owing, however, to the influence of his uncle, then British Ambassador at Washington, but far more to his own talents, Lytton rose rapidly in the diplomatic service holding office in the chief embassies, until Disraeli discerned in the brilliant speaker and writer the gifts that would grace the new Imperial policy in the East.

In ordinary times the new Viceroy would probably have crowned the new programme with success. His charm and vivacity of manner appealed to Orientals all the more by contrast with the cold and repellent behaviour that too often characterises Anglo-Indian officials in their dealings with natives. Lytton's mind was tinged with the Eastern glow that lit up alike the stories, the speeches, and the policy of his chief. It is true the Imperialist programme was as grandiosely vague as the meaning of *Tancred* itself; but in a land where forms and words count for much the lack of backbone in the new policy was less observed and commented on than by the matter-of-fact islanders whom it was designed to glorify.

The apotheosis of the new policy was the proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India (July 1, 1877), an event which was signalled by a splendid Durbar at Delhi on January 1, 1878. The new title warned the world that, however far Russia advanced in Central Asia, England



nailed the flag of India to her masthead. It was also a useful reminder to the small but not uninfluential Positivist school in England that their "disapproval" of the existence of a British Empire in India was wholly Platonic. Seeing also that the name "Queen" in Hindu (*Malika*) was one of merely respectable mediocrity in that land of splendour, the new title, "Kaisar-i-Hind," helped to emphasise the supremacy of the British Raj over the Nizam and Gaekwar. In fact, it is difficult now to take seriously the impassioned protests with which a number of insulars greeted the proposal.

Nevertheless, in one sense the change of title came about most inopportunistly. Fate willed that over against the Durbar at Delhi there stood forth the spectral form of Famine, bestriding the dusty plains of the Carnatic. By the glint of her eyes the splendours of Delhi shone pale, and the viceregal eloquence was hushed in the distant hum of her multitudinous wailing. The contrast shocked all beholders, and unfitted them for a proper appreciation of the new foreign policy.

That policy may also be arraigned on less sentimental grounds. The year 1876 witnessed the re-opening of the Eastern Question in a most threatening manner, the Disraeli Ministry taking up what may be termed the Palmerstonian view that the maintenance of Turkey was essential to the stability of the Indian Empire. As happened in and after 1854, Russia, when thwarted in Europe, sought for her revenge in the lands bordering on India. No district was so favourable to Muscovite schemes as the Afghan frontier, then, as now, the weakest point in Great Britain's imperial armour. Thenceforth the Afghan Question became a pendant of the Eastern Question.

Russia found ready to hand the means of impressing the Ameer with a sense of her irresistible power. The Czar's officials had little difficulty in picking a quarrel with the Khanate of Khokand. Under the pretext of suppressing a revolt (which Vambéry and others consider to have been prepared through Muscovite agencies) they sent troops, ostensibly with the view of favouring the Khan. The expedition gained a complete success alike over the rebels and the Khan himself who thenceforth sank to the level of pensioner of his liberators (1876). It is significant that General Kaufmann at once sent to the Ameer at Cabul a glowing account of the Russian success<sup>1</sup>; and the news of this communication increased the desire of the British Government to come to a clear understanding with the Ameer.

Unfortunately the authorities of great Britain set to work in a way that increased his irritation. Lord Salisbury on February 28, 1876, instructed Lord Lytton to offer slightly larger concessions to Shere Ali; but he refused to go further than to allow "a frank recognition [not a guaranty] of a *de facto* order in the succession" to the throne of Afghanistan, and undertook to defend his dominions against external attack "only in some clear case of unprovoked aggression." On the other hand, the British Government stated that "they must have, for their own agents, undisputed access to [the] frontier positions [of Afghanistan]." <sup>2</sup> Thus, while granting very little more than before, the new Ministry claimed for British agents and officers a right of entry which wounded the pride of a suspicious ruler and a fanatical people.

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Central Asia, No. 1 (1881), pp. 12-14; Shere Ali's letters to him (some of them suspicious) and the replies are also printed.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Papers, Central Asia, No. 1 (1881), pp. 156-159.

To sum up, the English gave Shere Ali no help while he was struggling for power with his rivals, and after he had won the day, they pinned him to the terms of a one-sided alliance. In the matter of the Seistan frontier dispute with Persia British arbitration was insolently defied by the latter Power, yet England urged the Ameer to accept the Shah's terms. According to Lord Napier of Magdala, he felt the loss of the once Afghan district of Seistan more keenly than anything else, and thenceforth regarded the British as weak and untrustworthy.

The Ameer's irritation increased at the close of the year when the Viceroy concluded an important treaty with the Khan of Khelat in Baluchistan. It would take us too far from our main path to turn aside into the jungle of Baluchee politics. Suffice it to say that the long series of civil strifes in that land had come to an end largely owing to the influence of Major (afterwards Sir Robert) Sandeman. His fine presence, masterful personality, frank, straightforward, and kindly demeanour early impressed the Khan and his turbulent Sirdars. In two Missions which he undertook to Khelat in the years 1875 and 1876, he succeeded in stilling their internal feuds and in clearing away the misunderstandings which had arisen with the Indian Government. But he saw still farther ahead. Detecting signs of foreign intrigue in that land, he urged that British mediation should, if possible, become permanent. His arguments before long convinced the new viceroy, Lord Lytton, who had at first doubted the advisability of the second Mission; and in the course of a tour along the north-west frontier, he held at Jacobabad a grand Durbar, which was attended by the Khan of Khelat and his once

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

rebellious Sirdars. There, on December 8, 1876, he signed a treaty with the Khan, whereby the British Government became the final arbiter in all disputes between him and his Sirdars, obtained the right of stationing British troops in certain parts of Baluchistan, and of constructing railways and telegraphs. Three lakhs of rupees were given to the Khan, and his yearly subsidy of 50,000 rupees was doubled.<sup>1</sup>

The Treaty of Jacobabad is one of the most satisfactory diplomatic triumphs of the present age. It came, not as the sequel to a sanguinary war, but as a sign of the confidence inspired in turbulent and sometimes treacherous chiefs by the sterling qualities of those able frontier statesmen, the Napiers, the Lawrences, General Jacob, and Major Sandeman. It spread the *pax Britannica* over a land as large as Great Britain, and quietly brought a warlike people within the sphere of influence of India. It may be compared with Bonaparte's Act of Mediation in Switzerland (1803), as marking the triumph of a strong organising intelligence over factious groups, to which it imparted peace and order under the shelter of a generally beneficent suzerainty. Before long a strong garrison was posted at Quetta, and we gained the right to enlist Baluchee troops of excellent fighting powers. The Quetta position is a mountain bastion which strengthens the outer defences of India, just as the Alps and Juras, when under Napoleon's control, menaced any invaders of France.

This great advantage was weighted by one considerable

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Robert Sandeman*, by T. H. Thornton, chaps. ix.-x.; Parl. Papers relating to the Treaty . . . of 8th Dec., 1876; *The Forward Policy and its Results*, by R. I. Bruce; *Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, by Lady Betty Balfour, chap. iii.

The Indian rupee is worth sixteen pence.

drawback. The victory of British influence in Baluchistan aroused the utmost resentment of Shere Ali, who now saw his southern frontier outflanked by Britain. Efforts were made in January–February, 1877, to come to an understanding; but, as Lord Lytton insisted on the admission of British residents to Afghanistan, a long succession of interviews at Peshawur, between the Ameer's chief adviser and Sir Lewis Pelly, led to no other result than an increase of suspicion on both sides. The Viceroy thereupon warned the Ameer that all supplies and subsidies would be stopped until he became amenable to advice and ceased to maltreat subjects known to be favourable to the British alliance. As a retort the Ameer sought to call the border tribes to a *Jehad*, or holy war, against the British, but with little success. He had no hold over the tribes between Chitral and the Khyber Pass; and the incident served only to strengthen the Viceroy's aim of subjecting them to Britain. In the case of the Jowakis England succeeded, though only after a campaign which proved to be costly in men and money.

In fact, Lord Lytton was now convinced of the need of a radical change of frontier policy. He summed up his contentions in the following phrases in his despatches of the early summer of 1877: "Shere Ali has irrevocably slipped out of our hands; . . . I conceive that it is rather the disintegration and weakening, than the consolidation and establishment, of the Afghan power at which we must now begin to aim." As for the mountain barrier, in which men of the Lawrence school had been wont to trust, he termed it "a military mouse-trap," and he stated that Napoleon I. had once for all shown the futility of relying on a mountain range that had several

passes.<sup>1</sup> These assertions show what perhaps were the weak points of Lord Lytton in practical politics—an eager and impetuous disposition, too prone to be dazzled by the very brilliance of the phrases which he coined.

At the close of his despatch of April 8, 1878, to Lord Cranbrook (Lord Salisbury's successor at the India Office) he sketched out, as "the best arrangement," a scheme for breaking up the Cabul power and bringing about "the creation of a West Afghan Khanate, including Merv, Maimena, Balkh, Candahar, and Herat, under some prince of our own selection, who would be dependent on our support. With western Afghanistan thus disposed of, and a small station our own, close to our frontier in the Kurram valley, the destinies of Cabul itself would be to us a matter of no importance."<sup>2</sup>

This, then, was the new policy in its widest scope. Naturally it met with sharp opposition from Lord Lawrence and others in the India Council at Whitehall. Besides involving a complete change of front, it would naturally lead to war with the Ameer, and (if the intentions about Merv were persisted in) with Russia as well. And for what purpose? In order that Britain might gain an advanced frontier and break in pieces the one important state which remained as a buffer between India and Russian Asia. In the eyes of all but military men this policy stood self-condemned. Its opponents pointed out that doubtless Russian intrigues were going on at Cabul; but they were the result of the marked hostility between England and Russia in Europe, and a natural retort to the sending of Indian troops to Malta. Besides, was it true

<sup>1</sup> Lady B. Balfour, *op. cit.* pp. 166-185, 247-248.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 246-247.

that British influence at Cabul was permanently lost? Might it not be restored by money and diplomacy? Or, if these means failed, could not affairs be so worked at Cabul as to bring about the deposition of the Ameer in favour of some claimant who would support England? In any case, the extension of British responsibilities to centres so remote as Balkh and Herat would overstrain the already burdened finances of India, and impair her power of defence at vital points.

These objections seem to have had some weight at Whitehall, for by the month of August the Viceroy somewhat lowered his tone; he gave up all hope of influencing Merv, and consented to make another effort to win back the Ameer, or to seek to replace him by a more tractable prince. But, failing this, he advised, though with reluctance on political grounds, the conquest and occupation of so much of Afghan territory as would "be absolutely requisite for the permanent maintenance of our north-west frontier."<sup>1</sup>

But by this time all hope of peace had become precarious. On June 13th, the day of opening of the Congress of Berlin, a Russian Mission, under General Stolieteff, left Samarcand for Cabul. The Ameer is said to have heard this news with deep concern, and to have sought to prevent its crossing the frontier. The Russians, however, refused to turn back, and entered Cabul on July 22nd.<sup>2</sup> As will be seen by reference to Skobelev's "Plan for the Invasion of India" (Appendix, p. 000), the Mission was to

<sup>1</sup> Lady B. Balfour, *op. cit.* p. 255. For a defence of this on military grounds see Lord Roberts's *Forty-one Years in India*, ii., p. 187, and Thorburn's *Asiatic Neighbours*, chap. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 1 (1878), pp. 242-243; *ibid.*, Central Asia, No. 1, pp. 165 *et seq.*

be backed up by columns of troops; and, with the aim of redoubling the pressure of Russian diplomacy in Europe, the Minister for War at St. Petersburg had issued orders on April 25, 1878, for the despatch of three columns of troops which were to make a demonstration against India. The chief force, 12,000 strong, with 44 guns and a rocket battery, was to march from Samarcand and Tashkend on Cabul; the second, consisting of only 1700 men, was to stir up the mountain tribes of the Chitral district to raid the north of the Punjab; while the third, of the same strength, moved from the middle part of the Amu Daria (Oxus) towards Merv and Herat. The main force set out from Tashkend on June 13th, and after a most trying march reached the Russo-Bokharan border, only to find that its toils were fruitless owing to the signature of the Treaty of Berlin (July 13th). The same disappointing news dispelled the dreams of conquest which had nerved the other columns in their burning march.

Thus ended the scheme of invasion of India to which Skobelev had lately given shape and body. In January, 1877, while in his Central Asian command, he had drawn up a detailed plan, the important parts of which will be found in the Appendices of this volume. During the early spring of 1878, when the Russian army lay at San Stefano, near Constantinople, he drew up another plan of the same tenor. It seems certain that the general outline of these projects haunted the minds of officers and men in the expeditions just referred to; for the columns withdrew northwards most slowly and reluctantly.<sup>1</sup>

A perusal of Skobelev's plan will show that he relied also

<sup>1</sup> For details see *Russia's Advance towards India*, by "an Indian Officer," ii., pp. 109 *et seq.*



on a diplomatic Mission to Cabul and on the despatch of the Afghan pretender, Abdur Rahman, from Samarcand to the Afghan frontier. Both of these expedients were adopted in turn; the former achieved a startling but temporary success.

As has been stated above, General Stolieteff's Mission entered Cabul on July 22nd. The chief himself returned on August 24th, but other members of his Mission remained several weeks longer. There seem to be good grounds for believing that the Ameer, Shere Ali, signed a treaty with Stolieteff, but as to its purport we have no other clue than the draft which purports to be written out from memory by a secret agent of the Indian Government. Other Russian documents, some of which Lord Granville afterwards described as containing "some very disagreeable passages . . . written subsequently to the Treaty of Berlin," were found by Lord Roberts; and the Russian Government found it difficult to give a satisfactory explanation of them.<sup>1</sup>

In any case the Government of India could not stand by and witness the intrusion of Muscovite influence into Afghanistan. Action, however, was very difficult owing to the alienation of the Ameer. His resentment had now settled into lasting hatred. As a test question Lord Lytton sought to impose on him the reception of a British Mission. On August 8th he received telegraphic permission from London to make this demand. The Ameer, however, refused to allow a single British officer to enter the country; and the death of his son and heir on August 17th enabled

<sup>1</sup> The alleged treaty is printed, along with the other documents in Paris. Papers, Central Asia, No. 1 (1881), pp. 17-30. See also, Lord Roberts's *Forty-one Years in India*, ii., p. 477.

him to decline to attend to affairs of State for a whole month.

His conduct in this matter was condoned by the champions of "masterly inactivity" in this country, who proceeded to accuse the Viceroy of haste in sending forward the British Mission to the frontier before the full time of mourning was over.<sup>1</sup> We now know, however, that this sympathy was misplaced. Shere Ali's grief did not prevent his seeing officers of the Russian Mission after his bereavement, and (as it seems) signing an alliance with the emissaries of the Czar. Lord Lytton was better informed as to the state of things at Cabul than were his very numerous critics, one of whom, under the shield of anonymity, confidently stated that the Russian Mission to Cabul was either an affair of etiquette or a means of warding off a prospective attack from India on Russian Turkestan; that the Ameer signed no treaty with the Mission, and was deeply embarrassed by its presence; while Lord Lytton's treatment of the Ameer was discourteous.<sup>2</sup>

In the light of facts as now known, these charges are seen to be the outcome of a vivid imagination or of partisan malice. There can be no doubt that Shere Ali had played the British false. Apart from his intrigues with Russia, he had condoned the murder of a British officer by keeping the murderer in office, and had sought to push on the frontier tribes into a holy war. Finally, he sent orders to stop the British Mission at Ali Musjid, the fort commanding the entrance to the Khyber Pass. This action, which occurred on September 22nd, must be pronounced a deliberate insult, seeing that the progress of that Mission had been

<sup>1</sup> Duke of Argyll, *The Eastern Question*, ii., pp. 504-507.

<sup>2</sup> *The Causes of the Afghan War*, pp. 305, etc.

so timed that it should reach Cabul after the days of mourning were over. In the Viceroy's view, the proper retort would have been a declaration of war; but again the Home Government imposed caution, urging the despatch of an ultimatum so as to give time for repentance at Cabul. It was sent on November 2nd, with the intimation that if no answer reached the frontier by November 20th, hostilities would begin. No answer came until a later date, and then it proved to be of an evasive character.

Such, in brief outline, were the causes of the second Afghan War. In the fuller light of to-day it is difficult to account for the passion which the discussion of them aroused at the time. But the critics of the Government held strong ground at two points. They could show, first, that the war resulted in the main from Lord Beaconsfield's persistent opposition to Russia in the Eastern Question, also that the Muscovite intrigues at Cabul were a natural and very effective retort to the showy and ineffective expedient of bringing Indian troops to Malta; in short, that the Afghan War was due largely to Russia's desire for revenge.

Secondly, they fastened on what was undoubtedly a weak point in the ministerial case, namely, that Lord Beaconsfield's speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet, on November 9, 1878, laid stress almost solely on the need for acquiring a scientific frontier on the north-west of India. In the parliamentary debate of December 9th, he sought to rectify this mistake by stating that he had never asserted that a new frontier was the object of the war, but rather a possible consequence. His critics refused to accept the correction. They pinned him to his first words. If this were so, they said, what need of recounting our complaints against Shere Ali? These were merely the pretexts, not

the causes, of a war which was to be waged solely in the cold-blooded quest for a scientific frontier. Perish India, they cried, if her fancied interests required the sacrifice of thousands of lives of brave hillmen on the altar of the new Imperialism !

These accusations were logically justifiable against ministers who dwelt largely on that frigid abstraction, the "scientific frontier," and laid less stress on the danger of leaving an ally of Russia on the throne of Afghanistan. The strong point of Lord Lytton's case lay in the fact that the policy of the Gladstone Ministry had led Shere Ali to side with Russia; but this fact was inadequately explained, or, at least, not in such a way as to influence public opinion. The popular fancy caught at the phrase "scientific frontier"; and for once Lord Beaconsfield's cleverness in phrase-making conspired to bring about his overthrow.

But the logic of words does not correspond to the logic of facts. Words are for the most part simple, downright, and absolute. The facts of history are very rarely so. Their importance is very often relative, and is conditioned by changing circumstances. It was so with the events that led up to the second Afghan War. They were very complex, and could not be summed up, or disposed of, by reference to a single formula. Undoubtedly the question of the frontier was important; but it did not become of supreme importance until, firstly, Shere Ali became our enemy, and, secondly, showed unmistakable signs of having a close understanding with Russia. Thenceforth it became a matter of vital import for India to have a frontier readily defensible against so strong a combination as that of Russia and Afghanistan.

It would be interesting to know what Mr. Gladstone and

his supporters would have done if they had come into power in the summer of 1878. That they blamed their opponents on many points of detail does not prove that they would not have taken drastic means to get rid of Shere Ali. In the unfortunate state into which affairs had drifted in 1878, how was that to be effected without war? The situation then existing may perhaps best be summed up in the words which General Roberts penned at Cabul on November 22, 1879, after a long and illuminating conversation with the new Ameer concerning his father's leanings towards Russia: "Our recent rupture with Shere Ali has, in fact, been the means of unmasking and checking a very serious conspiracy against the peace and security of our Indian Empire."<sup>1</sup>

Given the situation actually existing in 1878, the action of the British Government is justifiable as regards details. The weak point of the Beaconsfield policy was this,—that the situation need not have existed. So far as can be judged from the evidence hitherto published (if we except some wild talk on the part of Muscovite Chauvinists), Russia would not have interfered in Afghanistan except in order to paralyse England's action in Turkish affairs. As has been pointed out above, the Afghan trouble was a natural sequel to the opposition offered by Disraeli to Russia from the time of the re-opening of the Balkan problem in 1875-76; and the consideration of the events to be described in the following chapter will add one more to the many proofs already existing as to the fatefulness of the blunder committed by him when he wrecked the Berlin Memorandum, dissolved the Concert of the Powers, and rendered hopeless a peaceful solution of the Eastern Question.

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers Afghanistan, No. 1 (1880), p. 171.

## CHAPTER III

### THE AFGHAN AND TURKOMAN CAMPAIGNS

"The Forward Policy—in other words, the policy of endeavouring to extend our influence over, and establish law and order on, that part of the [Indian] Border, where anarchy, murder, and robbery up to the present time have reigned supreme, a policy which has been attended with the happiest results in Baluchistan and on the Gilgit frontier—is necessitated by the incontrovertible fact that a great Military Power is now within striking distance of our Indian possessions, and in immediate contact with a State for the integrity of which we have made ourselves responsible."—LORD ROBERTS. Speech in the House of Lords, March 7, 1898.

THE operations at the outset of the Afghan War ended with so easy a triumph for the British arms that it is needless to describe them in much detail. They were planned to proceed at three points on the irregular arc of the southeastern border of Afghanistan. The most northerly column, that of General Sir Samuel Browne, had Peshawur as its base of supplies. Some sixteen thousand strong, it easily captured the fort of Ali Musjid at the mouth of the Khyber Pass, then threaded that defile with little or no opposition, and pushed on to Jelalabad. Around that town (rendered famous by General Sale's defence in 1841-42) it dealt out punishment to the raiding clans of Afridis.

The column of the centre, acting from Kohat as a base against the Kurram valley, was commanded by a general destined to win renown in the later phases of the war.

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Major-General Roberts represented all that was noblest and most chivalrous in the annals of the British army in India. The second son of General Sir Abraham Roberts, G.C.B., and born at Cawnpore in 1832, he inherited the traditions of the service which he was to render still more illustrious. His frame, short and slight, seemed scarcely to fit him for warlike pursuits; and in ages when great stature and sturdy sinews were alone held in repute, he might have been relegated to civil life; but the careers of William III., Luxemburg, Nelson, and Roberts show that wiriness is more essential to a commander than animal strength, and that mind rather than muscle determines the course of campaigns. That the young aspirant for fame was not deficient in personal prowess appeared at Khudaganj, one of the battles of the Mutiny, when he captured a standard from two sepoys, and, later on the same day, cut down a third sepoy. But it was his clear insight into men and affairs, his hold on the principles of war, his alertness of mind, and his organising power, that raised him above the crowd of meritorious officers who saved India for Britain in those stormy days.

His achievements as Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General at Delhi and elsewhere at that time need not be referred to here; for he himself has related them in clear, lifelike, homely terms which reveal one of the sources of his personal influence. Englishmen admire a man who is active without being fussy, who combines greatness with simplicity, whose kindness is as devoid of ostentation as his religion is of mawkishness, and with whom ambition is ever the handmaid of patriotism. The character of a commander perhaps counts for more with British troops than with any others, except the French; and the men

who marched with Roberts from Cabul to Candahar, and from Paardeberg to Bloemfontein, could scarcely have carried out those feats of endurance for a general who did not possess both their trust and their love.

The devotion of the Kurram column to its chief was soon put to the test. After advancing up that valley, girt on both sides with lofty mountains and scored with numerous gulleys, the force descried the Piewar Kotal Pass at its head—a precipitous slope furrowed only in one place, where a narrow zigzag path ran upwards through pines and giant boulders. A reconnaissance proved that the Afghans held the upper part in force; and for some time Roberts felt the gravest misgivings. Hiding these feelings, especially from his native troops, he spent a few days in reconnoitring this formidable position. These efforts resulted in the discovery by Major Collett of another practicable gorge farther to the north, leading up to a neighbouring height, the Peiwar Spingawi, whence the head of the Kotal might possibly be turned.

To divide a column, comprising only 889 British and 2415 native troops, and that, too, in face of the superior numbers of the enemy, was a risky enterprise, but General Roberts determined to try the effect of a night march up to the Spingawi. He hoped by an attack at dawn on the Afghan detachment posted there, to turn the main position on the Kotal, and bring about its evacuation. This plan had often succeeded against Afghans. Their characteristics both in peace and war are distinctly feline. Prone to ease and enjoyment at ordinary times, yet, when stirred by lust of blood or booty, they are capable of great feats of swift, fierce onset; but, like all men and animals dominated by sudden impulses, their bravery is fitful, and is apt



to give way under persistent attack, or when their rear is threatened. The cat-like, stalking instinct has something of strategic caution, even in its wildest moods; it likes to be sure of the line of retreat.<sup>1</sup>

The British commander counted on exploiting these peculiarities to the full by stalking the enemy on their left flank, while he left about 1000 men to attack them once more in front. Setting out at nightfall of December 1st, he led the remainder northwards through a side valley, and then up a gully on the side of the Spingawi. The ascent through pine woods and rocks, in the teeth of an icy wind, was most trying; and the movement came near to failure owing to the treachery of two Pathan soldiers in the ranks, who fired off their rifles in the hope of warning the Afghans above them. The reports, it afterwards transpired, were heard by a sentry, who reported the matter to the commander of the Afghan detachment; he, for his part, did nothing. Much alarm was felt in the British column when the shots rang out in the darkness; a native officer hard by came up at once, and, by smelling the rifles of all his men, found out the offenders; but as they were Mohammedans he said nothing, in the hope of screening his co-religionists. Later on, these facts transpired at a court-martial, whereupon the elder of the two offenders, who was also the first to fire, was condemned to death, and the younger to a long term of imprisonment. The defaulting officer likewise received due punishment.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> General Sir J. L. Vaughan, in a lecture on "Afghanistan and the Military Operations Therein" (December 6, 1878), said of the Afghans: "When resolutely attacked they rarely hold their ground with any tenacity, and are always anxious about their rear."

<sup>2</sup> Lord Roberts, *Forty-one Years in India*, ii., p. 130 *et seq.*; Major J. A. S. Colquhoun, *With the Kurram Field Force*, 1878-79, pp. 101-102.

After this alarming incident, the 72nd Highlanders were sent forward to take the place of the native regiment previously leading, and once more the little column struggled on through the darkness up the rocky path. Their staunchness met its reward. At dawn the Highlanders and 5th Gurkhas charged the Afghan detachment in its entrenchments and breastworks of trees, and were soon masters of the Spingawi position. A long and anxious time of waiting now ensued, caused by the failure of the first frontal attack on the Kotal; but Roberts's pressure on the flank of the main Afghan position and another frontal attack sent the enemy flying in utter rout, leaving behind guns and waggons. The Kurram column had driven eight Afghan regiments and numbers of hillmen from a seemingly impregnable position, and now held the second of the outer passes leading towards Cabul (December 2, 1878). The Afghans offered but slight resistance at the Shutargardan Pass farther on, and from that point the invaders looked down on valleys that conducted them easily to the Ameer's capital.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile equal success was attending the 3rd British column, that of General Biddulph, which operated from Quetta. It occupied Sibi and the Khojak Pass; and on January 8, 1879, General Stewart and the vanguard reached Candahar, which they entered in triumph. The people seemed to regard their entry with indifference. This was but natural. Shere Ali had ruined his own cause. Hearing of the first defeats, he fled from Cabul in company with the remaining members of the Russian Mission still at that city (December 13th), and made for Afghan Turkestan in the hope of inducing his northern allies to give active aid.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Roberts, *op. cit.*, ii., pp. 135-149; S. H. Shadbolt, *The Afghan Campaigns of 1878-80*, i., pp. 21-25 (with plan).

He now discovered his error. The Czar's Government had been most active in making mischief between England and the Ameer, especially while the diplomatic struggle was going on at Berlin; but after the signature of the Treaty of Berlin (July 13, 1878), the natural leaning of Alexander II. towards peace and quietness began by degrees to assert itself. The warlike designs of Kaufmann and his officials in Turkestan received a check, though not so promptly as was consistent with strict neutrality.

Gradually the veil fell from the ex-Ameer's eyes. On the day of his flight (December 13th), he wrote to the "Officers of the British Government," stating that he was about to proceed to St. Petersburg, "where, before a Congress, the whole history of the transactions between myself and yourselves will be submitted to all the Powers."<sup>1</sup> But nine days later he published a firman containing a very remarkable letter purporting to come from General Stolieteff at Livadia in the Crimea, where he was staying with the Czar. After telling him that the British desired to come to terms with him (the Ameer) through the intervention of the Sultan, the letter proceeded as follows:

"But the Emperor's desire is that you should not admit the English into your country, and like last year, you are to treat them with deceit and deception until the present cold season passes away. Then the Almighty's will will be made manifest to you, that is to say, the [Russian] Govern-

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 7 (1879), p. 9. He also states, on p. 172, that the advice of the Afghan officials who accompanied Shere Ali in his flight was (even in April-May, 1879) favourable to a Russian alliance, and that they advised Yakub in this sense. See Kaufmann's letters to Yakub, in Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 9 (1879).

ment having repeated the Bismillah, the Bismillah will come to your assistance. In short, you are to rest assured that matters will end well. If God permits, we will convene a Government meeting at St. Petersburg, that is to say, a Congress, which means an assemblage of Powers. We will then open an official discussion with the English Government, and either by force of words and diplomatic action we will entirely cut off all English communications and interference with Afghanistan, or else events will end in a mighty and important war. By the help of God, by spring not a symptom or a vestige of trouble and dissatisfaction will remain in Afghanistan."

It is impossible to think that the Czar had any knowledge of this treacherous epistle, which, it is to be hoped, originated with the lowest of Russian agents, or emanated from some Afghan chief in their pay. Nevertheless the fact that Shere Ali published it shows that he hoped for Russian help, even when the British held the keys of his country in their hands. But one hope after another faded away, and in his last days he must have come to see that he had been merely the cat's-paw of the Russian bear. He died on February 21, 1879, hard by the city of Bactra, the modern Balkh.

That "mother of cities" has seen strange vicissitudes. It nourished the Zoroastrian and Buddhist creeds in their youth; from its crowded monasteries there shone forth light to the teeming millions of Asia, until culture was stamped out under the heel of Genghis Khan, and later, of Timur. In a still later day it saw the dawning greatness of that most brilliant but ill-starred of the Mogul Emperors, Aurungzebe. Its fallen temples and convents, stretching over many a mile, proclaim it to be the city of buried

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hopes. There was, then, something fitting in the place of Shere Ali's death. He might so readily have built up a powerful Afghan state in friendly union with the British Raj; he chose otherwise, and ended his life amidst the wreckage of his plans and the ruin of his kingdom. This result of the trust which he had reposed in Muscovite promises was not lost on the Afghan people and their rulers.

There is no need to detail the events of the first half of the year 1879 in Afghanistan. On the assembly of Parliament in February, Lord Beaconsfield declared that the English objects had been attained in that land now that the three chief mountain highways between Afghanistan and India were completely in Great Britain's power. It remained to find a responsible ruler with whom a lasting peace could be signed. Many difficulties were in the way, owing to the clannish feuds of the Afghans and the number of possible claimants for the crown. Two men stood forth as the most likely rulers: Shere Ali's rebellious son, Yakub Khan, who had lately been released from his long confinement, and Abdur Rahman, son of Ufzal Khan, who was still kept by the Russians in Turkestan under some measure of constraint, doubtless in the hope that he would be a serviceable trump card in the intricate play of rival interests certain to ensue at Cabul.

About February 20th, Yakub sent overtures for peace to the British Government; and, as the death of his father at that time greatly strengthened his claim, it was favourably considered at London and Calcutta. Despite one act at least of flagrant treachery, he was recognised as Ameer. On May 8th, he entered the British camp at Gandamak, near Jelalabad, and after negotiations a treaty was signed

there, May 26th. It provided for an amnesty, the control of the Ameer's foreign policy by the British Government, the establishment of a British Resident at Cabul, the construction of a telegraph line to that city, the grant of commercial facilities, and the cession to India of the frontier districts of Kurram, Pishin, and Sibi (the latter two are near Quetta). The British Government retained control over the Khyber and Michnee Passes and over the neighbouring tribes (which had never definitely acknowledged Afghan rule). It further agreed to pay to the Ameer and his successors a yearly subsidy of six lakhs of rupees (nearly £50,000).<sup>1</sup>

General Roberts and many others feared that the treaty had been signed too hastily, and that the Afghans, "an essentially arrogant and conceited people," needed a severer lesson before they acquiesced in British suzerainty. But no sense of foreboding depressed Major Sir Louis Cavagnari, the gallant and able officer who had carried out so much of the work on the frontier, when he proceeded to take up his abode at Cabul as a British resident (July 24th). The chief danger lay in the Afghan troops, particularly the regiments previously garrisoned at Herat, who knew little or nothing of British prowess, and whose fanaticism was inflamed by arrears of pay. Cavagnari's Journal, kept at Cabul, ended on August 19th with the statement that thirty-three Russians were coming up the Oxus to the Afghan frontier. But the real disturbing cause seems to have been the hatred of the Afghan troops to foreigners.

Failure to pay was so usual a circumstance in Afghanistan

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 7 (1879), p. 23; Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-173.

as scarcely to account for the events that ensued. Yet it furnished the excuse for an outbreak. Early on September 3rd, when assembled for what proved to be the farce of payment at Bala Hissar (the citadel), three regiments mutinied, stoned their officers, and then rushed towards the British Embassy. These regiments took part in the first onset against an unfortified building held by the Mission and a small escort. A steady musketry fire from the defenders long held them at bay; but, when joined by townsfolk and other troops, the mutineers set fire to the gates, and then, bursting in, overpowered the gallant garrison. The Ameer made only slight efforts to quell this treacherous outbreak, and, while defending his own palaces by faithful troops, sent none to help the envoy. These facts, as reported by trustworthy witnesses, did not correspond to the magniloquent assurances of fidelity that came from Yakub himself.<sup>1</sup>

Arrangements were at once made to retrieve this disaster, but staff and transport arrangements caused serious delay. At length General Roberts was able to advance up the Kurram valley and carry the Shutargardan Pass by storm, an exploit fully equal to his former capture of the Peiwar Kotal in the same mountain range. Somewhat farther on he met the Ameer, and was unfavourably impressed with him: "An insignificant-looking man, . . . with a receding forehead, a conical-shaped head, and no chin to speak of, . . . possessed, moreover, of a very shifty eye." Yakub justified this opinion by seeking on various pretexts to delay the British advance, and by sending to Cabul news as to the numbers of the British force.

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 1 (1880), pp. 32-42, 89-96.

All told, it numbered only 4000 fighting men with 18 cannon. Nevertheless, on nearing Cabul, it assailed a strong position at Charasia, held by 13 regular regiments of the enemy and some 10,000 irregulars. The charges of Highlanders (the 72nd and 92nd), Gurkhas, and Punjabis proved to be irresistible, and drove the Afghans from two ridges in succession. This feat of arms, which bordered on the miraculous, served to reveal the feelings of the Ameer in a manner equally ludicrous and sinister. Sitting in the British camp, he watched the fight with great eagerness, then with growing concern, until he finally needed all his Oriental composure for the final compliment which he bestowed on the victor. Later on it transpired that he and his adherents had laid careful plans for profiting by the defeat of the venturesome little force, so as to ensure its annihilation.<sup>1</sup>

The brilliant affair at Charasia served to bring out the conspicuous gallantry of two men, who were later on to win distinction in wider fields, Major White and Colour-Sergeant Hector Macdonald. White carried a ridge at the head of a body of fifty Highlanders. When the enemy fled to a second ridge, he resolved to spare the lives of his men by taking a rifle and stalking the enemy alone, until he suddenly appeared on their flank. Believing that his men were at his back, the Afghans turned and fled.

On October 9th Roberts occupied the Siah Sang ridge, overlooking Cabul, and on the next day entered the citadel, Bala Hissar, to inspect the charred and blood-stained ruins of the British Embassy. In the embers of a fire he and his staff found numbers of human bones. On

<sup>1</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*, ii., pp. 213-224; Hensman, *The Afghan War of 1878-1880*.



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October 12th Yakub came to the General to announce his intention of resigning the Ameer'ship, as he "would rather be a grass-cutter in the English camp than ruler of Afghanistan." On the next day the British force entered the city itself in triumph, and Roberts put the Ameer's Ministers under arrest. The citizens were silent but respectful, and manifested their satisfaction when he proclaimed that only those guilty of the treacherous attack on the Residency would be punished. Cabul itself was much more Russian than English. The Afghan officers wore Russian uniforms, Russian goods were sold in the bazaars, and Russian money was found in the treasury. It is evident that the Czar's officials had long been pushing on their designs, and that further persistency on the part of England in the antiquated policy of "masterly inactivity" would have led to Afghanistan's becoming a Muscovite satrapy.

The pendulum now swung sharply in favour of India. To that land Roberts despatched the ex-Ameer on December 1st, on the finding of the Commission that he had been guilty of criminal negligence (if not worse) at the time of the massacre of Cavagnari and his escort. Two Afghan Sirdars, whose guilt respecting that tragedy had been clearly proven, were also deported and imprisoned. This caused much commotion, and towards the close of the year the preaching of a fanatic, whose name denoted "fragrance of the universe," stirred up hatred to the conquerors.

Bands of tribesmen began to cluster around Cabul, and an endeavour to disperse them led to a temporary British reverse not far from the Sherpur cantonments where Roberts held his troops. The situation was serious. As generally happens with Asiatics, the hillmen rose by

thousands at the news, and beset the line of communications with India. Sir Frederick Roberts, however, staunchly held his ground at the Sherpur camp, beating off one very serious attack of the tribesmen on December 20-23. On the next day General Gough succeeded in breaking through from Gandamak to his relief. Other troops were hurried up from India, and this news ended the anxiety which had throbbled through the Empire at the news of Roberts's being surrounded near Cabul.

Now that the league of hillmen had been for the time broken up, it became more than ever necessary to find a ruler for Afghanistan, and settle affairs with all speed. This was also desirable in view of the probability of a General Election in the United Kingdom in the early part of the year 1880, the Ministry wishing to have ready an Afghan settlement to act as a soporific drug on the ravening Cerberus of democracy at home. Unhappily, the outbreak of the Zulu War on January 11, 1880, speedily followed by the disaster of Isandlana, redoubled the complaints in the United Kingdom, with the result that matters were more than ever pressed on in Afghanistan. Some of the tribes clamoured for the return of Yakub, only to be informed by General Roberts that such a step would never be allowed.

In the midst of this uncertainty, when the hour for the advent of a strong man seemed to have struck, he opportunely appeared. Strange to say, he came from Russian Turkestan.

As has been stated above, Abdur Rahman, son of Ufzal Khan, had long lived there as a pensioner of the Czar; his bravery and skill in intrigue had been well known. The Russian writer, Petrovsky, described him as longing, above

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all things, to get square with the English and Shere Ali. It was doubtless with this belief in the exile's aims that the Russians gave him twenty-five hundred pounds and two hundred rifles. His advent in Afghanistan seemed well calculated to add to the confusion there and to the difficulties of England. With only one hundred followers he forded the Oxus and, early in 1880, began to gather around him a band in Afghan Turkestan. His success was startlingly rapid, and by the end of March he was master of all that district.<sup>1</sup>

But the political results of this first success were still more surprising. Lord Lytton, Sir Frederick Roberts, and Mr. Lepel Griffin (political commissioner in Afghanistan) soon saw the advantage of treating with him for his succession to the throne of Cabul. The Viceroy, however, true to his earlier resolve to break up Afghanistan, added the unpleasant condition that the districts of Candahar and Herat must now be severed from the north of Afghanistan. Abdur Rahman's first request that the whole land should form a neutral State under the joint protection of Great Britain and Russia was decisively negatived, on the ground that the former Power stood pledged by the treaty of Gandamak not to allow the intervention of any foreign State in Afghan affairs. A strong man like Abdur Rahman appreciated the decisiveness of this statement; and, while holding back with the caution and suspicion natural to Afghans, he thenceforth leaned more to the British side, despite the fact that Lord Lytton had recognised a second Shere Ali as "Wali," or Governor,<sup>2</sup> of

<sup>1</sup> See his adventures in *The Life of Abdur Rahman*, by Sultan Mohammed Khan, ii., chaps. v., vi. He gave out that he came to expel the English (pp. 173-175).

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*, ii., pp. 315-323.

Candahar and its district. On April 19th, Sir Donald Stewart routed a large Afghan force near Ghaznee, and thereafter occupied that town. He reached Cabul on May 5th. It appeared that the resistance of the natives was broken.

Such was the state of affairs when the General Election of April, 1880, installed Mr. Gladstone in power in place of Lord Beaconsfield. As has been hinted above, Afghan affairs had helped to bring about this change; and the world now waited to see what would be the action of the party which had fulminated against the "forward policy" in India. As is usually the case after ministerial changes, the new Prime Minister disappointed the hopes of his most ardent friends and the fears of his bitterest opponents. The policy of "scuttle" was, of course, never thought of; but, as the new Government stood pledged to limit its responsibilities in India as far as possible, one great change took place. Lord Lytton laid down his Viceroyalty when the full results of the General Election manifested themselves; and the world saw the strange sight of a brilliant and powerful ruler, who took precedence of ancient dynasties in India, retiring into private life at the bidding of votes silently cast in ballot-boxes far away in islands of the north.

No more startling result of the working of the democratic system has ever been seen in Imperial affairs, and it may lead the student of Roman history to speculate what might have been the results in that ancient Empire if the populace of Italy could honestly have discharged the like duties with regard to the action of their proconsuls. Roman policy might have lacked some of its stateliness and solidity, but assuredly the government of the provinces would have improved. Whatever may be said as to the

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evils of change brought about by popular caprice, they are less serious than those which grow up under the shadow of an uncriticised and irresponsible bureaucracy.

Some time elapsed before the new Viceroy, Lord Ripon, could take up the reins of power. In that interval difficulties had arisen with Abdur Rahman, but on July 20th the British authorities at Cabul publicly recognised him as Ameer of Northern Afghanistan. The question as to the severance of Candahar from Cabul, and the amount of the subsidy to be paid to the new ruler, were left open and caused some difference of opinion; but a friendly arrangement was practically assured a few days later.

For many reasons this was desirable. As far back as April 11, 1880, Mr. (now Sir) Lepel Griffin had announced in a Durbar at Cabul that the British forces would withdraw from Afghanistan when the Government considered that a satisfactory settlement had been made; that it was the friend, not the enemy, of Islam, and would keep the sword for its enemies. The time had now come to make good these statements. In the closing days of July Abdur Rahman was duly installed in power at Cabul, and received 19½ lakhs of rupees (£190,500).<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile his champions prepared to evacuate that city and to avenge a disaster which had overtaken their arms in the province of Candahar. On July 29th news arrived that a British brigade had been cut to pieces at Maiwand.

The fact that we supported the Sirdar named Shere Ali at Candahar seemed to blight his authority over the tribesmen in that quarter. All hope of maintaining his rule

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Abdur Rahman*, ii., pp. 197-198. For these negotiations and the final recognition, see Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 1 (1881), pp. 16-51.

vanished when tidings arrived that Ayub Khan, a younger brother of the deported Yakub, was marching from the side of Herat to claim the crown. Already the new pretender had gained the support of several Afghan chiefs around Herat, and now proclaimed a *jehad*, or holy war, against the infidels holding Cabul. With a force of seven thousand five hundred men and ten guns he left Herat on June 15th, and moved towards the river Helmand, gathering around him numbers of tribesmen and ghazis.<sup>1</sup>

In order to break this gathering cloud of war betimes, the Indian Government ordered General Primrose, who commanded the British garrison at Candahar, to despatch a brigade to the Helmand. Accordingly, Brigadier-General Burrows, with 2300 British and Indian troops, marched out from Candahar on July 11th. On the other side of the Helmand lay an Afghan force, acting in the British interest, sent thither by the Sirdar, Shere Ali. Two days later the whole native force mutinied and marched off towards Ayub Khan. Burrows promptly pursued them, captured their six guns, and scattered the mutineers with loss.

Even so, his position was most serious. In front of him, at no great distance, was a far superior force flushed with fanaticism and the hope of easy triumph; the river Helmand offered little, if any, protection, for at that season it was everywhere fordable; behind him stretched twenty-five miles of burning desert. By a speedy retreat across this arid zone to Khushk-i-Nakhud, Burrows averted the disaster then imminent, but his anxiety to carry out the

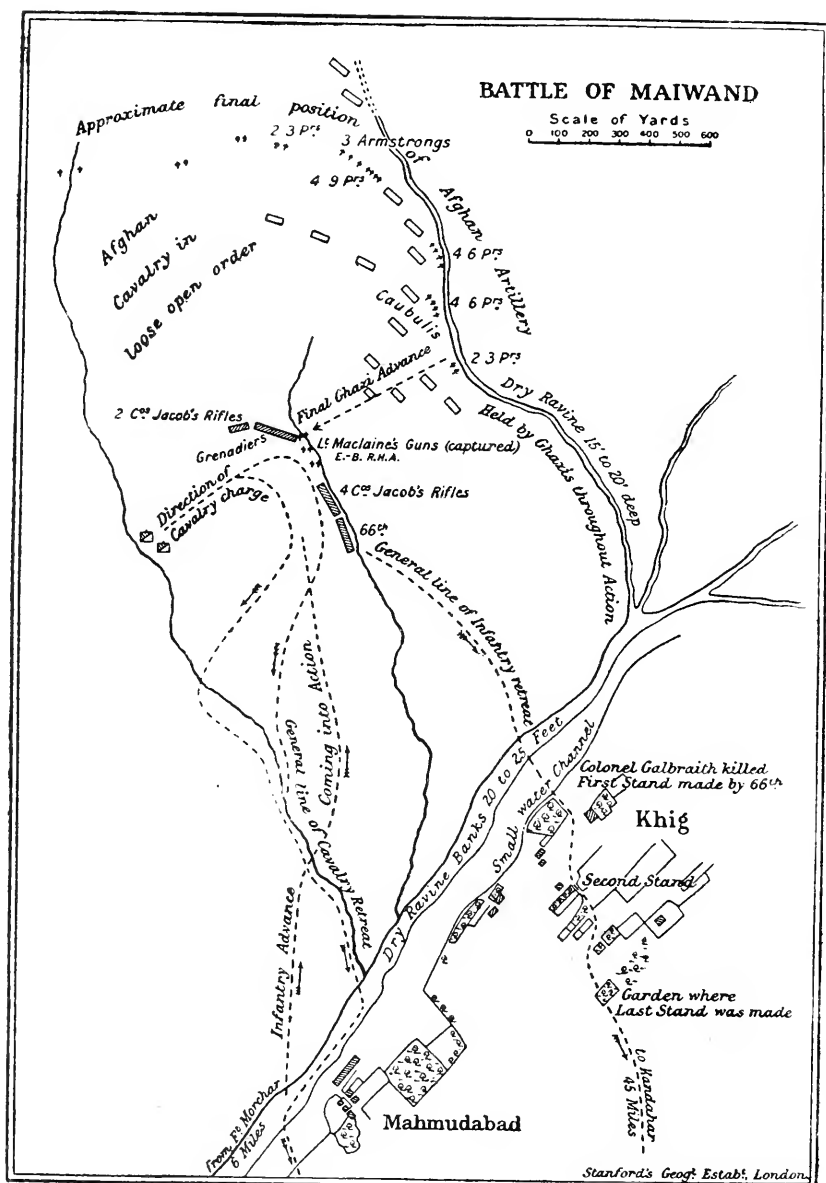
<sup>1</sup> "A ghazi is a man who, purely for the sake of his religion, kills an unbeliever, Kaffir, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian, in the belief that in so doing he gains a sure title to Paradise" (R. I. Bruce, *The Forward Policy*, p. 245).

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telegraphic orders of the Commander-in-chief, and to prevent Ayub's force from reaching Ghaznee, led him into an enterprise which proved to be far beyond his strength.

Hearing that 2000 of the enemy's horsemen and a large number of ghazis had hurried forward in advance of the main body to Maiwand, he determined to attack them there. At 6.30 A.M. on July 27th he struck camp and moved forwards with his little force of 2599 fighting men. Daring has wrought wonders in Indian warfare, but rarely has any British commander undertaken so dangerous a task as that to which Burrows set his hand on that morning.

During his march he heard news from a spy that the Afghan main body was about to join their vanguard; but either because he distrusted the news, or hoped even at the last to "pluck the flower, safety, out of the nettle, danger," he pushed on and sought to cut through the line of the enemy's advance as it made for Maiwand. About 10 A.M. his column passed the village of Khig and, crossing a dried watercourse, entered a parched plain whereon the fringe of the enemy's force could dimly be seen through the thick and sultry air. Believing that he had to deal with no large body of men, Burrows pushed on, and two of Lieutenant Maclaine's guns began to shell their scattered groups. Like wasps roused to fury, the ghazis rushed together as if for a charge, and lines of Afghan regulars came into view. The deceitful haze yielded up its secret,—Burrows's brigade stood face to face with 15,000 Afghans! Moreover, some influence, baleful to England, kept back those Asiatics from their usually heedless rush. Their guns came up and opened fire on Burrows's line. Even the white, quivering groups of their ghazis forbore to charge with their whetted knives, but clung to a gully which





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afforded good cover five hundred yards away from the British front and right flank; there the Afghan regulars galled the exposed khaki line, while their cannon, now numbering thirty pieces, kept up a fire to which Maclaine's twelve guns could give no adequate reply.

It has been stated by military critics that Burrows erred in letting the fight at the outset become an affair of artillery, in which he was plainly the weaker. Some of his guns were put out of action; and in that open plain there was no cover for the fighting line, the reserves, or the supporting horse. All of them sustained heavy losses from the unusually accurate aim of the Afghan gunners. But the enemy had also suffered under our cannonade and musketry; and it is consonant with the traditions of Indian warfare to suppose that a charge firmly pushed home at the first signs of wavering in the hostile mass would have retrieved the day. Plassey and Assaye were won by sheer boldness. Such a chance is said to have occurred about noon at Maiwand. However that may be, Burrows decided to remain on the defensive, perhaps because the hostile masses were too dense and too full of fight to warrant the adoption of dashing tactics.

After the sun passed his zenith the enemy began to press on the front and flanks. Burrows swung round his wings to meet these threatening moves; but, as the feline and predatory instincts of the Afghans kindled more and more at the sight of the weak, bent, and stationary line, so, too, the *morale* of the defenders fell. The British and Indian troops alike were exhausted by the long march and by the torments of thirst in the sultry heat. Under the fire of the Afghan cannon and the frontal and flank advance of the enemy, the line began to waver about 2 P.M., and two

of the foremost guns were lost. A native regiment in the centre, Jacob's Rifles, fled in utter confusion and spread disorder on the flanks, where the 1st Grenadier Guards and the 66th line regiment had long maintained a desperate fight. General Nuttall now ordered several squadrons of the 3rd Light Cavalry and 3rd Sind Horse to recover the guns and stay the onrushing tide, but their numbers were too small for the task, and the charge was not pressed home. Finally the whole mass of pursued and pursuers rolled towards the village of Khig and its outlying enclosures.

There a final stand was made. Colonel Galbraith and about one hundred officers and men of the 66th threw themselves into a garden enclosure, plied the enemy fiercely with bullets, and time after time beat back every rush of the ghazis, now rioting in that carnival of death. Surrounded by the flood of the Afghan advance, the little band fought on, hopeless of life, but determined to uphold to the last the honour of their flag and country. At last only eleven were left. These heroes determined to die in the open; charging out on the masses around, they formed square, and back to back stood firing on the foe. Not until the last of them fell under the Afghan rifles did the ghazis venture to close in with their knives, so dauntless had been the bearing of this band.<sup>1</sup>

They had not fought in vain. Their stubborn stand held back the Afghan pursuit and gave time for the fugitives to come together on the way back to Candahar. Had the pursuit been pushed on with vigour few, if any, could have survived. Even so, Maiwand was one of the

<sup>1</sup> Report of General Primrose in Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 3 (1880), p. 156.

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gravest disasters ever sustained by England's Indian army. It cost Burrows's force nearly half its numbers: 934 officers and men were killed and 175 wounded. The strange disproportion between these totals may serve as a measure of the ferocity of Afghans in the hour of victory. Of the non-combatants 790 fell under the knives of the ghazis. The remnant struggled towards Candahar, whence, on the 28th, General Primrose despatched a column to the aid of the exhausted survivors. In the citadel of that fortress there mustered as many as 4360 effectives as night fell. But what were these in face of Ayub's victorious army, now joined by tribesmen eager for revenge and plunder? <sup>1</sup>

In face of this disaster, the British generals in Northern Afghanistan formed a decision commendable alike for its boldness and its sagacity. They decided to despatch at once all available troops from Cabul to the relief of the beleaguered garrison at Candahar. General Sir Frederick Roberts had handed over the command at Cabul to Sir Donald Stewart, and was about to operate among the tribes on the Afghan frontier, when the news of the disaster sent him hurrying back to confer with the new Commander-in-chief. Together they recommended the plan named above.

It involved grave dangers, for affairs in the north of Afghanistan were unsettled, and to withdraw the rest of our force from Cabul to the Khyber would give the rein to local disaffection. The Indian authorities at Simla inclined to the despatch of the force at Quetta, comprising seven regiments of native troops, from Bombay. The

<sup>1</sup> S. H. Shadbolt, *The Afghan Campaigns of 1878-80*, pp. 96-100; Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 2 (1880), p. 21; No. 3, pp. 103-105; Lord Roberts, *op. cit.*, ii., pp. 333-335; Hensman, *op. cit.*, pp. 553-554.

route was certainly far easier; for, thanks to the toil of engineers, the railway from the Indus valley towards Quetta had been completed up to a point in advance of Sibi; and the labours of Major Sandeman, Bruce, and others, had kept that district fairly quiet.<sup>1</sup> But the troops at Quetta and Pishin were held to be incapable of facing a superior force of victorious Afghans. At Cabul there were nine regiments of infantry, three of cavalry, and three mountain batteries, all of them British or picked Indian troops. On August 3rd, Lord Ripon telegraphed his permission for the despatch of the Cabul field-force to Candahar. It amounted to 2835 British (the 72nd and 92nd Highlanders and 2nd battalion of the 60th Rifles, and 9th Lancers), 7151 Indian troops, together with 18 guns. On August 9th it struck camp and set out on a march which was destined to be famous.

Fortunately, before it left the Cabul camp on August 9th, matters were skilfully arranged by Mr. Griffin with Abdur Rahman, on terms which will be noticed presently. In spite of one or two suspicious incidents, his loyalty to the British cause now seemed to be assured, and that, too, in spite of the remonstrances of many of his supporters. He therefore sent forward messengers to prepare the way for Roberts's force. They did so by telling the tribesmen that the new Ameer was sending the foreign army out of the land by way of Candahar! This pleasing fiction in some measure helped on the progress of the force, and the issue of events proved it to be no very great travesty of the truth.

<sup>1</sup> *Colonel Sandeman: His Life and Work on our Indian Frontier*, by T. H. Thornton; R. I. Bruce, *The Forward Policy and its Results* (1900), chaps. iv., v.; *Candahar in 1879; Being the Diary of Major Le Mesurier, R.E.* (1880). The last had reported in 1879 that the fortifications of Candahar were weak and the citadel in bad repair.

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Every possible device was needed to ensure triumph over physical obstacles. In order to expedite the march through the difficult country between Cabul and Candahar, no wheeled guns or waggons went with the force. As many as eight thousand native bearers or drivers set out with the force, but very many of them deserted, and the 8255 horses, mules, and donkeys were thenceforth driven by men told off from the regiments. The line of march led at first through the fertile valley of the Logar river, where the troops and followers were able to reap the ripening crops and subsist in comfort. Money was paid for the crops thus appropriated. After leaving this fertile district for the barren uplands, the question of food and fuel became very serious; but it was overcome by ingenuity and patience, though occasional times of privation had to be faced, as, for instance, when only very small roots were found for the cooking of corn and meat. A lofty range, the Zamburak Kotal, was crossed with great toil and amidst biting cold at night-time; but the ability of the commander, the forethought and organising power of his staff, and the hardihood of the men overcame all trials and obstacles.

The army then reached the more fertile districts around Ghazni, and on August 15th gained an entry without resistance to that once formidable stronghold. Steady marching brought the force eight days later to the hill fort of Kelat-i-Ghilzai, where it received a hearty welcome from the British garrison of nine hundred men. Sir Frederick Roberts determined to take on these troops with him, as he needed all his strength to cope with the growing power of Yakub. After a day's rest (well earned, seeing that the force had traversed 225 miles in 14 days), the column

set forth on its last stages, cheered by the thought of rescuing their comrades at Candahar, but more and more oppressed by the heat, which, in the lower districts of South Afghanistan, is as fierce as anywhere in the world. Mr. Hensman, the war correspondent of the *Daily News*, summed up in one telling phrase the chief difficulties of the troops. "The sun laughed to scorn 100° F. in the shade." On the 27th the commander fell ill with a sharp attack of fever.

Nevertheless he instructed the Indian cavalry to push on to Robat and open up heliographic communication with Candahar. It then transpired that the approach of the column had already changed the situation. Already, on August 23rd, Ayub had raised the siege and retired to the hills north of the city. That relief came none too soon appeared on the morning of the 31st, when the thin and feeble cheering that greeted the rescuers on their entrance to the long-beleaguered town told its sad tale of want, disease, and depression of heart. The men who had marched 313 miles in 22 days—an average of 14½ miles a day—felt a thrill of sympathy, not unmixed with disgust in some cases, at the want of spirit too plainly discernible among the defenders. The Union Jack was not hoisted on the citadel until the rescuers were near at hand.<sup>1</sup> General Roberts might have applied to them Hecuba's words to Priam (during the sack of Troy:)

Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis  
tempus eget;

As for the *morale* of the relieving force, it now stood at the zenith, as was seen on the following day. Framing his measures so as to encourage Ayub to stand his ground,

<sup>1</sup> Roberts, *op. cit.*, ii., p. 357.

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Roberts planned his attack in the way that had already led to success, namely, a frontal attack more imposing than serious, while the enemy's flank was turned and his communications were threatened. These moves were carried out by Generals Ross and Baker with great skill. Under the persistent pressure of the British onset the Afghans fell back from position to position, north-west of Candahar, until finally Major White with the 92nd, supported by Gurkhas and the 23rd Pioneers, drove them back to their last ridge, the Baba Wali Kotal, swarmed up its western flank, and threw the whole of the hostile mass in utter confusion into the plain beyond. Owing to the very broken nature of the ground, few British and Indian horsemen were at hand to reap the full fruits of victory; but many of Ayub's regulars and ghazis fell under their avenging sabres. The beaten force deserved no mercy. When the British triumph was assured, the Afghan chief ordered his prisoner, Lieutenant Maclaine, to be butchered; whereupon he himself and his suite took to flight. The whole of his artillery, twenty-seven pieces, including the two British guns lost at Maiwand, fell into the victor's hands. In fact, Ayub's force ceased to exist; many of his troops at once assumed the garb of peaceful cultivators, and the Pretender himself fled to Herat.<sup>1</sup>

Thus ended an enterprise which, but for the exercise of the highest qualities on the part of General Roberts, his staff, the officers, and rank and file, might easily have ended in irretrievable disaster. This will appear from the following considerations: The question of food and water

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Afghanistan, No. 3 (1880), p. 82; Hensman, *The Afghan War*; Shadbolt, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-110. The last reckons Ayub's force at 12,800, of whom 1200 were slain.

during a prolonged march in that parched season of the year might have caused the gravest difficulties; but they were solved by a wise choice of route along or near water-courses where water could generally be procured. The few days when little or no water could be had showed what might have happened. Further, the help assured by the action of the Ameer's emissaries among the tribesmen was of little avail after the valley of the Logar was left behind. Many of the tribes were actively hostile, and cut off stragglers and baggage-animals.

Above and beyond these daily difficulties, there was the problem as to the line of retreat to be taken in case of a reverse inflicted by the tribes *en route*. The army had given up its base of operations; for at the same time the remaining British and Indian regiments at Cabul were withdrawn to the Khyber Pass. True, there was General Phayre's force holding Quetta and endeavouring to stretch out a hand towards Candahar; but the natural obstacles and lack of transport prevented the arrival of help from that quarter. It is, however, scarcely correct to say that Roberts had no line of retreat assured in case of defeat.<sup>1</sup> No serious fighting was to be expected before Candahar; for the Afghan plundering instinct was likely to keep Ayub near to that city, where the garrison was hard pressed. After leaving Ghazni, the Quetta route became the natural way of retirement.

As it happened, the difficulties were mainly those inflicted by the stern hand of Nature herself; and their severity may be gauged by the fact that out of a well-seasoned force of less than ten thousand fighting men as many as 940 sick had at once to go into hospital at Candahar. The

<sup>1</sup> Shadbolt, *op. cit.*, p. 107.



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burning days and frosty nights of the Afghan uplands were more fatal than the rifles of Ayub and the knives of the ghazis. As Lord Roberts has modestly admitted, the long march gained in dramatic effect because for three weeks he and his army were lost to the world, and, suddenly emerging from the unknown, gained a decisive triumph. But, allowing for this element of picturesqueness, so unusual in an age when the daily din of telegrams dulls the perception of readers, we may still maintain that the march from Cabul to Candahar will bear comparison with any similar achievement in modern history.

The story of British relations with Afghanistan is one which illustrates the infinite capacity of our race to "muddle through" to some more or less satisfactory settlement. This was especially the case in the spring and summer of 1880, when the accession of Mr. Gladstone to power and the disaster of Maiwand changed the diplomatic and military situation. In one sense, and that not a cryptic one, these events served to supplement one another. They rendered inevitable the entire evacuation of Afghanistan. That, it need hardly be said, was the policy of Mr. Gladstone, of the Secretary for India, Lord Hartington (now Duke of Devonshire), and of Lord Ripon.

On one point both parties were agreed. Events had shown how undesirable it was to hold Cabul and Central Afghanistan. The evacuation of all these districts was specified in Lord Lytton's last official Memorandum, that which he signed on June 7, 1880, as certain to take place as soon as the political arrangements at Cabul were duly settled. The retiring Viceroy, however, declared that in his judgment the whole province of Candahar must be severed from the Cabul power, whether Abdur Rahman

assented to it or not.<sup>1</sup> Obviously this implied the subjection of Candahar to British rule in some form. General Roberts himself argued stoutly for the retention of that city and district; and so did most of the military men. Lord Wolseley, on the other hand, urged that it would place an undesirable strain upon the resources of India, and that the city could readily be occupied from the Quetta position if ever the Russians advanced to Herat. The Cabinet strongly held this opinion; the exponents of Whig ideas, Lord Hartington and the Duke of Argyll, herein agreeing with the exponents of a peaceful un-Imperial commercialism, Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain. Consequently the last of the British troops were withdrawn from Candahar on April 15, 1881.

The retirement was more serious in appearance than in reality. The war had brought some substantial gains. The new frontier acquired by the Treaty of Gandamak—and the terms of that compact were practically void until Roberts's victory at Candahar gave them body and life—provided ample means for sending troops easily to the neighbourhood of Cabul, Ghazni, and Candahar; and experience showed that troops kept in the hill stations on the frontier preserved their mettle far better than those cantoned in or near the unhealthy cities just named. The Afghans had also learnt a sharp lesson of the danger and futility of leaning on Russia; and to this fact must be attributed the steady adherence of the new Ameer to the British side.

Moreover, the success of his rule depended largely on

<sup>1</sup> Lady B. Balfour, *op. cit.*, pp. 430, 445. On June 8th Lord Ripon arrived at Simla and took over the viceroyalty from Lord Lytton; the latter was raised to an earldom.

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our evacuation of his land. Experience has shown that a practically independent and united Afghanistan forms a better barrier to a Russian advance than an Afghanistan rent by the fanatical feuds that spring up during a foreign occupation. Finally, the great need of India after the long famine was economy. A prosperous and contented India might be trusted to beat off any army that Russia could send; a bankrupt India would be the breeding-ground of strife and mutiny; and on these fell powers Skobeleff counted as his most formidable allies.<sup>1</sup>

It remained to be seen whether Abdur Rahman could win Candahar and Herat, and, having won them, keep them. At first Fortune smiled on his rival, Ayub. That pretender sent a force from Herat southwards against the Ameer's troops, defeated them, and took Candahar (July, 1881). But Abdur Rahman had learnt to scorn the shifts of the fickle goddess. With a large force he marched to that city, bought over a part of Ayub's following, and then utterly defeated the remainder. This defeat was the end of Ayub's career. Flying back to Herat, he found it in the hands of the Ameer's supporters, and was fain to seek refuge in Persia. Both of these successes seem to have been due to the subsidies which the new Ameer drew from India.<sup>2</sup>

We may here refer to the last scene in which Ayub played a part before Englishmen. Foiled of his hopes in Persia, he finally retired to India. At a later day he appeared as a pensioner on the bounty of that Government at a review held at Rawal Pindi in the Punjab in honour

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix: also Lord Hartington's speeches in the House of Commons, March 25-26, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> Abdur Rahman's own account (*op. cit.*, ch. ix.) ascribes his triumph to his own skill and to Ayub's cowardice.

of the visit of H.R.H. Prince Victor. The Prince, on being informed of his presence, rode up to his carriage and saluted the fallen Sirdar. The incident profoundly touched the Afghans who were present. One of them said: "It was a noble act. It shows that you English are worthy to be the rulers of this land."<sup>1</sup>

The Afghans were accustomed to see the conquered crushed and scorned by the conqueror. Hence they did not resent the truculent methods resorted to by Abdur Rahman in the consolidation of his power. In his relentless grip the Afghan tribes soon acquired something of stability. Certainly Lord Lytton never made a wiser choice than that of Abdur Rahman for the ameership; and, strange to say, that choice obviated the evils which the Viceroy predicted as certain to accrue from the British withdrawal from Candahar.<sup>2</sup> Contrasting the action of Great Britain towards himself with that of Russia towards Shere Ali in his closing days, the new Ameer could scarcely waver in his choice of an alliance. And while he held the Indian Government away at arm's length, he never wavered at heart.

For in the meantime Russia had resumed her southward march, setting to work with the doggedness that she usually displays in the task of avenging slights and overbearing opposition. The penury of the exchequer, the plots of the Nihilists, and the discontent of the whole people after the inglorious struggle with Turkey, would have imposed on any other Government a policy of rest

<sup>1</sup> *Eighteen Years in the Khyber Pass* (1879-1898), by Colonel Sir R. Warburton, p. 213. The author's father had married a niece of the Ameer Dost Mohammed.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Lytton's speech in the House of Lords, Jan., 1881.

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and economy. To the stiff bureaucracy of St. Petersburg these were so many motives for adopting a forward policy in Asia. Conquests of Turkoman territory would bring wealth, at least to the bureaucrats and generals; and military triumphs might be counted on to raise the spirit of the troops, silence the talk about official peculations during the Turkish campaign, and act in the manner so sagaciously pointed out by Henry IV. to Prince Hal:

Therefore, my Harry,  
Be it thy course to busy giddy minds  
With foreign quarrels, that action, hence borne out,  
May waste the memory of the former days.

In the autumn of 1878 General Lomakin had waged an unsuccessful campaign against the Tekke Turkomans, and finally fell back with heavy losses on Krasnovodsk, his base of operations on the Caspian Sea. In the summer of 1879 another expedition set out from that port to avenge the defeat. Owing to the death of the chief, Lomakin again rose to the command. His bad dispositions at the climax of the campaign led him to a more serious disaster. On coming up to the fortress of Denghil Tepe, near the town of Geok Tepe, he led only fourteen hundred men, or less than half of his force, to bombard and storm a stronghold held by some fifteen thousand Turkomans, and fortified on the plan suggested by a British officer, Lieutenant Butler.<sup>1</sup> Preluding his attack by a murderous cannonade, he sent round his cavalry to check the flight of the faint-hearted

<sup>1</sup> This officer wrote to the *Globe* on January 25, 1881, stating that he had fortified two other posts east of Denghil Tepe. This led Skobelev to push on to Askabad after the capture of that place; but he found no strongholds. See Marvin's *Russian Advance towards India*, p. 85.

among the garrison; and before his guns had fully done their work he ordered the whole line to advance and carry the walls by storm. At once the Turkoman fire redoubled in strength, tore away the front of every attacking party, and finally drove back the assailants everywhere with heavy loss (September 9, 1879). On the morrow the invaders fell back on the river Atrek and thence made their way back to the Caspian in sore straits.<sup>1</sup>

The next year witnessed the advent of a great soldier on the scene. Skobelev, the stormy petrel of Russian life, the man whose giant frame was animated by a hero's soul, who, when pitched from his horse in the rush on one of the death-dealing redoubts at Plevna, rose undaunted to his feet, brandished his broken sword in the air, and yelled at the enemy a defiance which thrilled his broken lines to a final mad charge over the rampart—Skobelev was at hand. He had culled his first laurels at Khiva and Khokand, and now came to the shores of the Caspian to carry forward the standards which he hoped one day to plant on the walls of Delhi. That he cherished this hope is proved by the memorandum which will be found in the Appendix of this volume. His disclaimer of any such intention to Mr. Charles Marvin (which will also be found there) shows that under his frank exterior there lay hidden the strain of Oriental duplicity so often found among his countrymen in political life.

At once the operations felt the influence of his active, cheery, and commanding personality. The materials for a railway, which had been lying unused at Bender, were now brought up; and Russia found the money to set about the construction of a railway from Michaelovsk to the Tekke

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Central Asia, No. 1 (1880), pp. 167-173, 182.

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Turkoman country—an undertaking which was destined wholly to change the conditions of warfare in South Turkestan and on the Afghan border. By the close of the year more than forty miles were roughly laid down, and Skobelev was ready for his final advance from Kizil Arvat towards Denghil Tepe.

Meanwhile the Tekkes had gained reinforcements from their kinsmen in the Merv oasis, and had massed nearly forty thousand men—so rumour ran—at their stronghold. Nevertheless, they offered no serious resistance to the Russian advance, doubtless because they hoped to increase the difficulties of his retreat after the repulse which they determined to inflict at their hill fortress. But Skobelev excelled Lomakin in skill no less than in prowess and magnetic influence. He proceeded to push his trenches towards the stronghold, so that on January 23, 1881, his men succeeded in placing twenty-six hundred pounds of gunpowder under the south-eastern corner of the rampart. Early on the following day the Russians began the assault; and while cannon and rockets wrought death and dismay among the ill-armed defenders, the mighty shock of the explosion tore away fifty yards of their rampart.

At once the Russian lines moved forward to end the work begun by gunpowder. With the blare of martial music and with ringing cheers, they charged at the still formidable walls. A young officer, Colonel Kuropatkin, who has since won notoriety in other lands, was ready with twelve companies to rush into the breach. Their leading files swarmed up it before the Tekkes fully recovered from the blow dealt by the hand of western science; but then the brave nomads closed in on foes with whom they could fight, and brought the storming party to a standstill.

Skobeleff was ready for the emergency. True to his Plevna tactics of ever feeding an attack at the crisis with new troops, he hurled forward two battalions of the line and companies of dismounted Cossacks. These pushed on the onset, hewed their way through all obstacles, and soon met the smaller storming parties which had penetrated at other points. By 1 P.M. the Russian standard waved in triumph from the central hill of the fortress, and thenceforth bands of Tekkes began to stream forth into the desert on the farther side.

Now Skobeleff gave to his foes a sharp lesson, which, he claimed, was the most merciful in the end. He ordered his men, horse and foot alike, to pursue the fugitives and spare no one. Ruthlessly the order was obeyed. First, the discharge of grape-shot from the light guns, then the bayonet, and lastly the Cossack lance, strewed the plain with corpses of men, women, and children; darkness alone put an end to the butchery, and then the desert for eleven miles eastward of Denghil Tepe bore witness to the thoroughness of Muscovite methods of warfare. All the men within the fortress were put to the sword. Skobeleff himself estimated the number of the slain at twenty thousand.<sup>1</sup> Booty to the value of six hundred thousand pounds fell to the lot of the victors. Since that awful day the once predatory tribes of Tekkes have given little trouble. Skobeleff sent his right-hand man, Kuropatkin, to occupy Askabad, and reconnoitre towards Merv, but these moves were checked by order of the Czar.

A curious incident, told to Lord Curzon, illustrates the dread in which Russian troops have since been held. At

<sup>1</sup> *Siege and Assault of Denghil Tepe*. By General Skobeleff (translated). London, 1881



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the opening of the railway to Askabad, five years later, the Russian military bands began to play. At once the women and children there present raised cries and shrieks of dread, while the men threw themselves on the ground. They imagined that the music was a signal for another onslaught like that which preluded the capture of their former stronghold.<sup>1</sup>

This victory proved to be the last of Skobeleff's career. The Government, having used their knight-errant, now put him on one side as too insubordinate and ambitious for his post. To his great disgust, he was recalled. He did not long survive. Owing to causes that are little known, among which a round of fast living is said to have played its part, he died suddenly from failure of the heart at his residence near Moscow (July 7, 1882). Some there were who whispered dark things as to his militant notions being out of favour with the new Czar, Alexander III.; others pointed significantly to Bismarck. Others, again, prattled of Destiny; but the best comment on the death of Skobeleff would seem to be that illuminating saying of Novalis—"Character is Destiny." Love of fame prompted in him the desire one day to measure swords with Lord Roberts in the Punjab; but the coarser strain in his nature dragged him to earth at the age of thirty-nine.

The accession of Alexander III., after the murder of his father on March 13, 1881, promised for a short time to usher in a more peaceful policy; but, in truth, the last important diplomatic assurance of the reign of Alexander II. was that given by the minister, M. de Giers, to Lord Dufferin, as to Russia's resolve not to occupy Merv: "Not

<sup>1</sup> *Russia in Central Asia in 1889*. By the Hon. G. N. Curzon (1889), p. 83.

only do we not want to go there, but, happily, there is nothing which can require us to go there."

In spite of a similar assurance given on April 5th to the Russian Ambassador in London, both the need and the desire soon sprang into existence. Muscovite agents made their way to the fruitful oasis of Merv; and a daring soldier, Alikhanoff, in the guise of a merchant's clerk, proceeded thither early in 1882, skilfully distributed money to work up a Russian party, and secretly sketched a plan of the fortress. Many chiefs and traders opposed Russia bitterly, for O'Donovan, a brilliant and adventurous Englishman, while captive there, sought to open their eyes to the coming danger. But England's influence had fallen to zero since Skobelev's victory and her own withdrawal from Candahar.<sup>1</sup>

In 1882, a Russian engineer officer, Lessar, in the guise of a scientific explorer, surveyed the route between Merv and Herat, and found that it presented far fewer difficulties than had been formerly reported to exist.<sup>2</sup> Finally, in 1884, the Czar's Government sought to revenge itself for Britain's continued occupation of Egypt by fomenting trouble near the Afghan border. Alikhanoff then reappeared, not in disguise, browbeat the hostile chieftains at Merv by threats of a Russian invasion, and finally induced them to take an oath of allegiance to Alexander III. (February 12, 1884).<sup>3</sup>

There was, however, some reason for Russia's violation of her repeated promises respecting Merv. In practical

<sup>1</sup> C. Marvin, *Merv, the Queen of the World* (1881); E. O'Donovan, *The Merv Oasis*, 2 vols. (1882-83), and *Merv* (1883).

<sup>2</sup> See his reports in *Parl. Papers, Central Asia*, No. 1 (1884), pp. 26, 36, 39, 63, 96, 106.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

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politics the theory of compensation has long gained an assured footing; and, seeing that Britain had occupied Egypt partly as the mandatory of Europe, and now refused to evacuate that land, the Russian Government had a good excuse for retaliation. As has happened at every time of tension between the two Empires since 1855, the Czar chose to embarrass the Island Power by pushing on towards India. As a matter of fact, the greater the pressure that Russia brought to bear on the Afghan frontier, the greater became the determination of England not to withdraw from Egypt. Hence, in the years 1882-84, both Powers plunged more deeply into that "vicious circle," in which the policy of the Crimean War had enclosed them, and from which they have never freed themselves.

The fact is deplorable. It has produced endless friction and has strained the resources of two great Empires; but the allegation of Russian perfidy in the Merv affair may be left to those who look at facts solely from the insular standpoint. In the eyes of patriotic Russians England was the offender: first, by opposing Muscovite policy tooth and nail in the Balkans; secondly, by seizing Egypt; and, thirdly, by refusing to withdraw from that commanding position. The important fact to notice is that after each of these provocations Russia sought her revenge on that flank of the British Empire to which she was guided by her own sure instincts and by the shrieks of insular Cassandras. By moving a few sotnias of Cossacks towards Herat she compelled her rival to spend a hundred-fold as much in military preparations in India.

It is undeniable that Russia's persistent breach of her promises in Asiatic affairs exasperated public opinion, and brought the two Empires to the verge of war. Conduct of

that description baffles the resources of diplomacy, which are designed to arrange disputes. Unfortunately, British foreign affairs were in the hands of Lord Granville, whose gentle reproaches only awakened contempt at St. Petersburg. The recent withdrawal of Lord Dufferin from St. Petersburg to Constantinople, on the plea of ill-health, was also a misfortune; but his appointment to the viceroyalty of India (September, 1884) placed at Calcutta a Governor-General superior to Lord Ripon in diplomatic experience.

There was every need for the exercise of ability and firmness both at Westminster and Calcutta. The climax in Russia's policy of lance-pricks was reached in the following year; and it has been assumed, apparently on good authority, that the understanding arrived at by the three Emperors in their meeting at Skiernewice (September, 1884) implied a tacit encouragement of Russia's designs in Central Asia, however much they were curbed in the Balkan Peninsula. This was certainly the aim of Bismarck, and that he knew a good deal about Russian movements is clear from his words to Busch on November 24, 1884: "Just keep a sharp lookout on the news from Afghanistan. Something will happen there soon."<sup>1</sup>

This was clearly more than a surmise. At that time an Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission was appointed to settle the many vexed questions concerning the delimitation of the Russo-Afghan boundary. General Sir Peter Lumsden proceeded to Sarrahks, expecting there to meet the Russian Commissioners by appointment in the middle of October, 1884. On various pretexts the work of the Commission was postponed in accordance with advices

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages in his History*, iii., pp. 124, 133 (Eng. edit.).

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sent from St. Petersburg. The aim of this dilatory policy soon became evident. That was the time when (as will appear in Chapter XVI.) the British expedition was slowly working its way towards Khartum in the effort to unravel the web of fate then closing in on the gallant Gordon. The news of his doom reached England on February 5, 1885. Then it was that Russia unmasked her designs. They included the appropriation of the town and district of Panjdeh, which she herself had previously acknowledged to be in Afghan territory. In vain did Lord Granville protest; in vain did he put forward proposals which conceded very much to the Czar, but less than his ministers determined to have. All that he could obtain was a promise that the Russians would not advance farther during the negotiations.

On March 13th, Mr. Gladstone officially announced that an agreement to this effect had been arrived at with Russia. The Foreign Minister at St. Petersburg, M. de Giers, on March 16th assured the British ambassador, Sir Edward Thornton, that that statement was correct. On March 26th, however, the light troops of General Komaroff advanced beyond the line of demarcation previously agreed on, and on the following day pushed past the Afghan force holding positions in front of Panjdeh. The Afghans refused to be drawn into a fight, but held their ground; thereupon, on March 29th, Komaroff sent them an ultimatum ordering them to withdraw beyond Panjdeh. A British staff-officer requested him to reconsider and recall this demand, but he himself was waived aside. Finally, on March 30th, Komaroff attacked the Afghan position, and drove out the defenders with the loss of nine hundred men. The survivors fell back on Herat, General Lumsden and his escort

retired in the same direction, and Russia took possession of the coveted prize.<sup>1</sup>

The news of this outrage reached England on April 7th, and sent a thrill of indignation through the breasts of the most peaceful. Twenty days later Mr. Gladstone proposed to Parliament to vote the sum of £11,000,000 for war preparations. Of this sum all but £4,500,000 (needed for the Sudan) was devoted to military and naval preparations against Russia; and we have the authority of Mr. John Morley for saying that this vote was supported by Liberals "with much more than a mechanical loyalty."<sup>2</sup> Russia had achieved the impossible: she had united Liberals of all shades of thought against her, and the joke about "Mervousness" was heard no more.

Nevertheless the firmness of the Government resembled that of Bob Acres,—it soon oozed away. Ministers deferred to the Czar's angry declaration that he would allow no inquiry into the action of General Komaroff. This alone was a most mischievous precedent, as it tended to inflate Russian officers with the belief that they could safely set at defiance the rules of international law. Still worse were the signs of favour showered on the violator of a truce by the sovereign who had gained the reputation of being the upholder of peace. From all that is known semi-officially with respect to the acute crisis of the spring of 1885, it would appear that peace was due solely to the tact of Sir Robert Morier, the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, and to the complaisance of the Gladstone Cabinet.

Certainly this quality carried ministers very far on the

<sup>1</sup> See Parl. Papers, Central Asia, No. 1 (1885), for General Lumsden's refutation of Komaroff's misstatements; also for the general accounts, *ibid.*, No. 5 (1885), pp. 1-7.

<sup>2</sup> J. Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, iii., p. 184.

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path of concession. When negotiations were resumed, the British Government belied its former promises of firmness in a matter that closely concerned their ally, and surrendered Panjdeh to Russia, but on the understanding that the Zulfikar Pass should be retained by the Afghans. It should be stated, however, that Abdur Rahman had already assured Lord Dufferin, during interviews which they had at Rawal Pindi early in April, of his readiness to give up Panjdeh if he could retain that pass and its approaches. The Russian Government conceded this point; but their negotiators then set to work to secure possession of heights dominating the pass. It seemed that Lord Granville was open to conviction even on this point.

Such was the state of affairs when, on June 9, 1885, Mr. Gladstone's Ministry resigned, owing to a defeat on a budget question. The accession of Lord Salisbury to power after a brief interval helped to clear up these disputes. The crisis in Bulgaria of September, 1885 (see Vol. I. Chapter X.), also served to distract the Russian Government, the Czar's chief pre-occupation now being to have his revenge on Prince Alexander of Battenberg. Consequently the two Powers came to a compromise about the Zulfikar Pass.<sup>1</sup> There still remained several questions outstanding, and only after long and arduous surveys, not unmingled with disputes, was the present boundary agreed on in a protocol signed on July 22, 1887. We may here refer to a prophecy made by one of Bismarck's *confidantes*, Bucher, at the close of May, 1885: "I believe the [Afghan] matter will come up again in about five years, when the [Russian] railways are finished." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Central Asia, No. 4 (1885), pp. 41-72.

<sup>2</sup> *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages*, etc., iii., p. 135.

Thus it was that Russia secured her hold on districts dangerously near to Herat. Her methods at Panjdeh can only be described as a deliberate outrage on international law. It is clear that Alexander III. and his officials cared nothing for the public opinion of Europe, and that they pushed on their claims by means which appealed with overpowering force to the dominant motive of Orientals—fear. But their action was based on another consideration. Relying on Mr. Gladstone's well-known love of peace, they sought to degrade the British Government in the eyes of the Asiatic peoples. In some measure they succeeded. The prestige of Britain thenceforth paled before that of the Czar; and the ease and decisiveness of the Russian conquests, contrasting with the fitful advances and speedy withdrawals of British troops, spread the feeling in Central Asia that the future belonged to Russia.

Fortunately, this was not the light in which Abdur Rahman viewed the incident. He was not the man to yield to intimidation. That "strange, strong creature," as Lord Dufferin called him, "showed less emotion than might have been expected," but his resentment against Russia was none the less keen.<sup>1</sup> Her pressure only served to drive him to closer union with Great Britain. Clearly the Russians misunderstood Abdur Rahman. Their miscalculation was equally great as regards the character of the Afghans and the conditions of life among those mountain clans. Russian officers and administrators, after pushing their way easily through the loose rubble of tribes that make up Turkestan, did not realise that they had to deal with very different men in Afghanistan. To ride rough-

<sup>1</sup> In his *Life* (i., pp. 244-246) he also greatly blames British policy.



shod over tribes who live in the desert and have no natural rallying-point may be very effective; but that policy is risky when applied to tribes who cling to their mountains.

The analogy of Afghanistan to Switzerland may again serve to illustrate the difference between mountaineers and plain-dwellers. It was only when the Hapsburgs or the French threatened the Swiss that they formed any effective union for the defence of the Fatherland. Always at variance in time of peace, the cantons never united save under the stress of a common danger. The greater the pressure from without, the closer was the union. That truth has been illustrated several times, from the age of the legendary Tell down to the glorious efforts of 1798. In a word, the selfsame mountaineers who live disunited in time of peace, come together and act closely together in war, or under threat of war.

Accordingly, the action of England in retiring from Candahar, contrasting as it did with Russia's action at Panjdeh, marked out the line of true policy for Abdur Rahman. Thenceforth he and his tribesmen saw more clearly than ever that Russia was the foe; and it is noteworthy that under the shadow of the northern peril there has grown up among those turbulent clans a sense of unity never known before. Unconsciously Russia has been playing the part of a Napoleon I.; she has ground together some at least of the peoples of Central Asia with a thoroughness which may lead to unexpected results if ever events favour a general rising against the conqueror.

Amidst all his seeming vacillations of policy, Abdur Rahman was governed by the thought of keeping England, and still more Russia, from his land. He absolutely refused to allow railways and telegraphs to enter his

territories, for, as he said: "Where Europeans build railways, their armies quickly follow. My neighbours have all been swallowed up in this manner. I have no wish to suffer their fate."

His judgment was sound. Skobelev conquered the Tekkes by his railway; and the acquisition of Merv and Panjdeh was really the outcome of the new trans-Caspian line, which, as Lord Curzon has pointed out, completely changed the problem of the defence of India. Formerly the natural line of advance for Russia was from Orenburg to Tashkend and the upper Oxus; and even now that railway would enable her to make a powerful diversion against Northern Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> But the route from Krasnovodsk on the Caspian to Merv and Kushk presents a shorter and far easier route, leading, moreover, to the open side of Afghanistan, Herat, and Candahar. Recent experiments have shown that a division of troops can be sent in eight days from Moscow to Kushk, within a short distance of the Afghan frontier. In a word, Russia can operate against Afghanistan by a line (or rather by two lines) far shorter and easier than any which Great Britain can use for its defence.<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore of the utmost importance to prevent her pushing on her railways into that country. This is the consideration which inspired Mr. Balfour's noteworthy declaration of May 11, 1905, in the House of Commons:

"As transport is the great difficulty of an invading army, we must not allow anything to be done which would facilitate transport. It ought, in my opinion, to be con-

<sup>1</sup> See Col. A. Durand's *The Making of a Frontier* (1899), pp. 41-43.

<sup>2</sup> Colquhoun, *Russia against India*, p. 170. Lord Curzon in 1894 went over much of the ground between Sarrahs and Candahar and found it quite easy for an army (except in food-supply).

sidered as an act of direct aggression upon this country that any attempt should be made to build a railway, in connection with the Russian strategic railways, within the territory of Afghanistan."

It is fairly certain that the present Ameer, Habibulla, who succeeded his father in 1901, holds those views. This doubtless was the reason why, early in 1905, he took the unprecedented step of *inviting* the Indian Government to send a Mission to Cabul. In view of the increase of Russia's railways in Central Asia there was more need than ever of coming to a secret understanding with a view to defence against that Power.

Finally, we may note that Great Britain has done very much to make up for her natural defects of position. The Panjdeh affair having relegated the policy of "masterly inactivity" to the limbo of benevolent futilities, the materials for the Quetta railway, which had been in large part sent back to Bombay in the year 1881, were now brought back again; and an alternative route was made to Quetta. The urgent need of checkmating French intrigues in Burmah led to the annexation of that land (November, 1885); and the Kurram valley, commanding Cabul, which the Gladstone Government had abandoned, was reoccupied. The Quetta district was annexed to India in 1887 under the title of British Baluchistan. The year 1891 saw an important work undertaken in advance of Quetta, the Khojak tunnel being then driven through a range close by the Afghan frontier, while an entrenched camp was constructed near by for the storage of arms and supplies. These positions, and the general hold which Britain keeps over the Baluchee clans, enable the defenders of India to threaten on the flank any advance by

the otherwise practicable route from Candahar to the Indus.

Certainly there is every need for careful preparations against any such enterprise. Lord Curzon, writing before Russia's strategic railways were complete, thought it feasible for Russia speedily to throw 150,000 men into Afghanistan, feed them there, and send on 90,000 of them against the Indus.<sup>1</sup> After the optimistic account of the problem of Indian defence given by Mr. Balfour in the speech above referred to, it is well to remember that, though Russia cannot invade India until she has conquered Afghanistan, yet for that preliminary undertaking she has the advantages of time and position nearly entirely on her side. Further, the completion of her railways almost up to the Afghan frontier (the Tashkend railway is about to be pushed on to the north bank of the Oxus, near Balkh) minimises the difficulties of food-supply and transport in Afghanistan, on which the Prime Minister laid so much stress.

It is, however, indisputable that the security of India has been greatly enhanced by the steady pushing on of that "forward policy," which all friends of peace used to decry. The Ameer, Abdur Rahman, irritated by the making of the Khojak tunnel, was soothed by Sir Mortimer Durand's Mission in 1893; and in return for an increase of subsidy and other advantages, he agreed that the tribes of the debatable borderland—the Waziris, Afridis, and those of the Swat and Chitral valleys—should be under the control of the Viceroy. Russia showed her annoyance at this

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 307. Other authorities differ as to practicability of feeding so large a force even in the comparatively fertile districts of Herat and Candahar.

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Mission by seeking to seize an Afghan town, Murghab; but the Ameer's troops beat them off.<sup>1</sup> Lord Lansdowne claimed that this right of permanently controlling very troublesome tribes would end the days of futile "punitive expeditions." In the main he was right. The peace and security of the frontier depend on the tact with which some few scores of officers carry on difficult work of which no one ever hears.<sup>2</sup>

In nearly all cases they have succeeded in their heroic toil. But the work of pacification was disturbed in the year 1895 by a rising in the Chitral valley, which cut off in Chitral fort a small force of Sikhs and loyal Kashmir troops with their British officers. Relieving columns from the Swat valley and Gilgit cut their way through swarms of hillmen and relieved the little garrison after a harassing leaguer of forty-five days.<sup>3</sup> The annoyance evinced by Russian officers at the success of the expedition and the retention of the whole of the Chitral district (as large as Wales) prompts the conjecture that they had not been strangers to the original outbreak. In this year Russia and England delimited their boundaries in the Pamirs.

The year 1897 saw all the hill tribes west and south of Peshawur rise against the British Raj. Moslem fanaticism, kindled by the Sultan's victories over the Greeks, is said to have brought about the explosion, though critics of the Calcutta Government ascribe it to official folly.<sup>4</sup> With

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Abdur Rahman*, i., p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> For this work see *The Life of Sir R. Sandeman*; Sir R. Warburton, *Eighteen Years in the Khyber*; Durand, *op. cit.*; Bruce, *The Forward Policy and its Results*; Sir James Willcock's *From Cabul to Kumassi*; S. S. Thorburn, *The Punjab in Peace and War*.

<sup>3</sup> *The Relief of Chitral*, by Captains G. J. and F. E. Younghusband (1895).

<sup>4</sup> See *The Punjab in Peace and War*, by S. S. Thorburn, *ad fin.*

truly Roman solidity the British Government quelled the risings, the capture of the heights of Dargai by the "gay Gordons" showing the sturdy hillmen that they were no match for our best troops. Since then the "forward policy" has amply justified itself, thousands of fine troops being recruited from tribes which were recently daring marauders, ready for a dash into the plains of the Punjab at the bidding of any would-be disturber of the peace of India. In this case, then, Britain has transformed a troublesome border fringe into a protective girdle.

Whether the Russian Government intends in the future to invade India is a question which time alone can answer. Viewing her Central Asian policy from the time of the Crimean War, the student must admit that it bears distinct traces of such a design. Her advance has always been most conspicuous in the years succeeding any rebuff dealt by Great Britain, as happened after that war, and still more after the Berlin Congress. At first, the theory that a civilised Power must swallow up restless raiding neighbours could be cited in explanation of such progress; but such a defence utterly fails to account for the cynical aggression at Panjdeh and the favour shown by the Czar to the general who violated a truce. Equally does it fail to explain the pushing on of strategic railways since the time of the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902. Possibly Russia intends only to exert upon that Achilles heel of the British Empire the terrible but nominally pacific pressure which she brings to bear on the open frontiers of Germany and Austria; and the constant discussion by her officers of plans of invasion of India may be wholly unofficial. At the same time we must remember

that the idea has long been a favourite one with the Russian bureaucracy, and the example of the years 1877-81 shows that that class is ready and eager to wipe out by a campaign in Central Asia the memory of a war barren of fame and booty. But that again depends on more general questions, especially those of finance (now a very serious question for Russia, seeing that she has drained Paris and Berlin of all possible loans) and of alliance with some great Power, or Powers, anxious to effect the overthrow of Great Britain.

If Great Britain be not enervated by luxury; if she be not led astray from the paths of true policy by windy talk about "splendid isolation"; if also she can retain the loyal support of the various peoples of India, she may face the contingency of such an invasion with firmness and equanimity. That it will come is the opinion of very many authorities of high standing. A native gentleman of high official rank, who brings forward new evidence on the subject, has recently declared it to be "inevitable."<sup>1</sup> Such, too, is the belief of the greatest authority on Indian warfare. Lord Roberts closes his autobiography by affirming that an invasion is "inevitable in the end. We have done much, and may do still more to delay it; but when that struggle comes, it will be incumbent upon us, both for political and military reasons, to make use of all the troops and war material that the natives states can place at our disposal."

### POSTSCRIPT

On May 22, 1905, the *Times* published particulars concerning the Anglo-Afghan Treaty recently signed at Cabul. It renewed the

<sup>1</sup> See *The Nineteenth Century and After* for May, 1905.

compact made with the late Ameer, whereby he agreed to have no relations with any foreign Power except Great Britain, the latter agreeing to defend him against foreign aggression. The subsidy of £120,000 a year is to be continued, but the present Ameer Habibulla, henceforth receives a title equivalent to "King" and is styled "His Majesty."



## CHAPTER IV

### BRITAIN IN EGYPT

IT will be well to begin the story of the expansion of the nations of Europe in Africa by a brief statement of the events which brought Britain to her present position in Egypt. As we have seen, the French conquest of Tunis, occurring a year earlier, formed the first of the many expeditions which inaugurated "the partition of Africa"—a topic which, as regards the west, centre, and south of that continent, will engage our attention subsequently. In this chapter and the following it will be convenient to bring together the facts concerning the valley of the Nile, a district which up to a recent time has had only a slight connection with the other parts of that mighty continent. In his quaint account of that mysterious land, Herodotus always spoke of it as distinct from Libya; and this aloofness has characterised Lower Egypt almost down to the present age, when the events which we are about to consider brought it into close touch with the equatorial regions.

The story of the infiltration of British influence into Egypt is one of the most curious in all history. To this day, despite the recent agreement with France (1904), the position of England in the valley of the lower Nile is irregular, in view of the undeniable fact that the Sultan is still the suzerain of that land. What is even stranger, it results from the gradual control which the purse-holder

has imposed on the borrower. The power that holds the purse-strings counts for much in the political world, as also elsewhere. Both in national and domestic affairs it ensures, in the last instance, the control of the earning department over the spending department. It is the *ultima ratio* of parliaments and husbands.

In order fully to understand the relations of Egypt to Turkey and to the purse-holders of the West, we must glance back at the salient events in her history for the past century. The first event that brought the land of the Pharaohs into the arena of European politics was the conquest by Bonaparte in 1798. He meant to make Egypt a flourishing colony, to have the Suez Canal cut, and to use Alexandria and Suez as bases of action against the British possessions in India. This daring design was foiled by Nelson's victory at the Nile, and by the Abercrombie-Hutchinson expedition of 1801, which compelled the surrender of the French army left by Bonaparte in Egypt. The three years of French occupation had no great political results except the awakening of British statesmanship to a sense of the value of Egypt for the safeguarding of India. They also served to weaken the power of the Mamelukes, a Circassian military caste which had reduced the Sultan's authority over Egypt to a mere shadow. The ruin of this warlike cavalry was gradually completed by an Albanian soldier of fortune named Mohammed Ali, who, first in the name of the Sultan, and later in defiance of his power, gradually won the allegiance of the different races of Egypt and made himself virtually ruler of the land. This powerful Pasha conquered the northern part of the Sudan, and founded Khartum as the southern bulwark of his realm (1823). He seems to have grasped the important

fact that, as Egypt depends absolutely on the waters poured down by the Nile in its periodic floods, her rulers must control that river in its upper reaches—an idea also held by the ablest of the Pharaohs. To secure this control, what place could be so suitable as Khartum, at the junction of the White and Blue Niles?

Mohammed Ali was able to build up an army and navy, which in 1841 was on the point of overthrowing Turkish power in Syria, when Great Britain intervened, and by the capture of Acre compelled the ambitious Pasha to abandon his northern schemes and own once more the suzerainty of the Porte. The Sultan, however, acknowledged that the Pashalic of Egypt should be hereditary in his family. We may remark here that England and France had nearly come to blows over the Syrian question of that year; but, thanks to the firm demeanour of Lord Palmerston, their rivalry ended, as in 1801, in the triumph of British influence and the assertion of the nominal ascendancy of the Sultan in Egypt. Mohammed was to pay his lord £363,000 a year. He died in 1849.

No great event took place during the rule of the next Pashas, or Khedives, as they were now termed, Abbas I. (1849–54), and Said (1854–63), except that M. de Lesseps, a French engineer, gained the consent of Said in 1856 to the cutting of a ship-canal, the northern entrance to which bears the name of that Khedive. Owing to the rivalry of Britain and France over the canal it was not finished until 1869, during the rule of Ismail (1863–79). We may note here that, as the concession was granted to the Suez Canal Company only for a hundred years, the canal will become the property of the Egyptian Government in the year 1969.

The opening of the canal placed Egypt once more on one

of the greatest highways of the world's commerce, and promised to bring endless wealth to her ports. That hope has not been fulfilled. The profits have gone almost entirely to the foreign investors, and a certain amount of trade has been withdrawn from the Egyptian railways. Sir John Stokes, speaking in 1887, said he found in Egypt a prevalent impression that the country had been injured by the canal.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly Egypt was less prosperous after its opening, but probably owing to another and mightier event which occurred at the beginning of Ismail's rule. This was the American Civil War. The blockade of the Southern States by the Federal cruisers cut off from Lancashire and northern France the supplies of raw cotton which are the life-blood of their industries. Cotton went up in price until even the conservative fellahin of Egypt saw the desirability of growing that strange new shrub—the first instance on record of a change in their tillage that came about without compulsion. So great were the profits reaped by intelligent growers that many fellahin bought Circassian and Abyssinian wives, and established harems in which jewels, perfumes, silks, and mirrors were to be found. In a word, Egypt rioted in its new-found wealth. This may be imagined from the totals of exports, which in three years rose from £4,500,000 to considerably more than £13,000,000.<sup>2</sup>

But then came the end of the American Civil War. Cotton fell to its normal price, and ruin stared Egypt in the face. For not only merchants and fellahin, but also their

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by D. A. Cameron, *Egypt in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> *Egypt and the Egyptian Question*, by Sir D. Mackenzie Wallace (1883), pp. 318-320.

ruler, had plunged into expenditure, and on the most lavish scale. Nay! Believing that the Suez Canal would bring boundless wealth to his land, Ismail persisted in his palace-building and other forms of Oriental extravagance, with the result that in the first twelve years of his reign, that is, by the year 1875, he had spent more than £100,000,000 of public money, of which scarcely one-tenth had been applied to useful ends. The most noteworthy of these last were the barrage of the Nile in the upper part of the delta, an irrigation canal in Upper Egypt, the Ibrahimiyeh Canal, and the commencement of the Wady Halfa-Khartum railway. The grandeur of his views may be realised when it is remembered that he ordered this railway to be made of the same gauge as those of South Africa, because "it would save trouble in the end."

As to the sudden fall in the price of cotton, his only expedient for making good the loss was to grow sugar on a great scale, but this was done so unwisely as to increase the deficits. As a natural consequence, the Egyptian debt, which at his accession stood at £3,000,000, reached the extraordinary sum of £89,000,000 in the year 1876, and that, too, despite the increase of the land tax by one-half. All the means which Oriental ingenuity has devised for the systematic plunder of a people were now put in force; so that Sir Alfred Milner (now Lord Milner), after unequalled opportunities of studying the Egyptian Question, declared: "There is nothing in the financial history of any country, from the remotest ages to the present time, to equal this carnival of extravagance and oppression."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *England in Egypt*, by Sir Alfred Milner (Lord Milner), 1892, pp. 216-219. (The Egyptian pound is equal to £1:0:6.) I give the figures as pounds sterling.

The Khedive himself had to make some sacrifices of a private nature, and one of these led to an event of international importance. Towards the close of the year 1875 he decided to sell the 177,000 shares which he held in the Suez Canal Company. In the first place he offered them secretly to the French Government for 100,000,000 francs; and the Foreign Minister, the Duc Decazes, it seems, wished to buy them; but the Premier, M. Buffet, and other Ministers hesitated, perhaps in view of the threats of war from Germany, which had alarmed all responsible men. In any case, France lost her chance.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately for Great Britain, news of the affair was sent to one of her ablest journalists, Mr. Frederick Greenwood, who at once begged Lord Derby, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, to grant him an interview. The result was an urgent message from Lord Derby to Colonel Staunton, the British envoy in Egypt, to find out the truth from the Khedive himself. The tidings proved to be correct, and the Beaconsfield Cabinet at once sanctioned the purchase of the shares for the sum of close on £4,000,000.

It is said that the French envoy to Egypt was playing billiards when he heard of the purchase, and in his rage he broke his cue in half. His anger was natural, quite apart from financial considerations. In that respect the purchase has been a brilliant success; for the shares are now worth more than £30,000,000, and yield an annual return of about a million sterling; but this monetary gain is as nothing when compared with the influence which the United Kingdom has gained in the affairs of a great undertaking whereby M. de Lesseps hoped to assure the ascendancy of France in Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> *La Question d'Égypte*, by C. de Freycinet (1905), p. 151.

The facts of history, it should be noted, lent support to this contention of the "great Frenchman." The idea of the canal had originated with Napoleon I., and it was revived with much energy by the followers of the French philosopher, Saint-Simon, in the years 1833-37.<sup>1</sup> The project, however, then encountered the opposition of British statesmen, as it did from the days of Pitt to those of Palmerston. This was not unnatural; for it promised to bring back to the ports of the Mediterranean the preponderant share in the Eastern trade which they had enjoyed before the discovery of the route by the Cape of Good Hope. The political and commercial interests of England were bound up with the sea route, especially after the Cape was definitively assigned to her by the Peace of Paris of 1814; but she could not see with indifference the control by France of a canal which would divert trade once more to the old overland route. That danger was now averted by the financial coup just noticed—an affair which may prove to have been scarcely less important in a political sense than Nelson's victory at the Nile.

In truth, the sea power has made up for her defects of position as regards Egypt by four great strokes: the triumph of her great admiral, the purchase of Ismail's canal shares, the repression of Arabi's revolt, and Lord Kitchener's victory at Omdurman. The present writer has not refrained from sharp criticism on British policy in the period 1870-1900, and the Egyptian policy of the cabinets of Queen Victoria has been at times open to grave censure; but, on the whole, it has come out well, thanks to the ability of individuals to supply the qualities of foresight, initiative, and unswerving persistence, in

<sup>1</sup> *La Question d'Égypte*, by C. de Freycinet, p. 106.

which Ministers since the time of Chatham have rarely excelled.

The sale of Ismail's canal shares only served to stave off the impending crash which would have formed the natural sequel to this new "South Sea Bubble." All who took part in this carnival of folly ought to have suffered alike, Ismail and his beys along with the stock-jobbers and dividend-hunters of London and Paris. In an ordinary case these last would have lost their money, but in this instance the borrower was weak and dependent, while the lenders were in a position to stir up two powerful Governments to action. Nearly the whole of the Egyptian loans was held in England and France; and in 1876, when Ismail was floating swiftly down stream to the abyss of bankruptcy, the British and French bondholders cast about them for means to secure their own safety. They organised themselves for the protection of their interests. The Khedive consented to hear the advice of their representatives, Messrs. Goschen and Joubert; but it was soon clear that he desired merely a comfortable liquidation and the continuance of his present expenditure.

That year saw the institution of the "*Caisse de la Dette*," with power to receive the revenue set aside for the service of the debt, and to sanction or forbid new loans; and in the month of November, 1876, the commission of bondholders took the form of the Dual Control. In 1878 a commission was appointed with power to examine the whole of the Egyptian administration. It met with the strongest opposition from the Khedive, until in the next year means were found to bring about his abdication by the act of the Sultan (June 26, 1879). His successor was his son Tewfik (1879-92).



On their side the bondholders had to submit to a reduction of rates of interest to a uniform rate of 4 per cent. on the unified debt. Even so, it was found in the year 1881—a prosperous year—that about half of the Egyptian revenue, then £9,229,000, had to be diverted to the payment of that interest.<sup>1</sup> Again, one must remark that such a situation in an overtaxed country would naturally end in bankruptcy; but this was prevented by foreign control, which sought to cut down expenditure in all directions. As a natural result, many industries suffered from the lack of due support; for even in the silt-beds formed by the Nile (and they are the real Egypt) there is need of capital to bring about due results. In brief, the popular discontent gave strength to a movement which aimed at ousting foreign influences of every kind, not only the usurers and stock-jobbers that sucked the life-blood of the land, but even the engineers and bankers who quickened its sluggish circulation. This movement was styled a national movement; and its abettors raised that cry of “Egypt for Egyptians,” which has had its counterpart wherever selfish patriots seek to keep all the good things of the land to themselves. The Egyptian troubles of the year 1882 originated partly in feelings of this narrow kind, and partly in the jealousies and strifes of military cliques.

Sir D. Mackenzie Wallace, after carefully investigating the origin of the “Arabi movement,” came to the conclusion that it was to be found in the determination of the native Egyptian officers to force their way to the higher grades of that army, hitherto reserved for Turks or Cir-

<sup>1</sup> *England in Egypt*, etc., p. 222. See there for details as to the Dual Control; also de Freycinet, *op. cit.*, chap. ii., and *The Expansion of Egypt*, by A. Silva White, chap. vi.

cassians. Said and Ismail had favoured the rise of the best soldiers of the fellahin class (that is, natives), and several of them, on becoming colonels, aimed at yet higher posts. This aroused bitter resentment in the dominant Turkish caste, which looked on the fellahin as born to pay taxes and bear burdens. Under the masterful Ismail these jealousies were hidden, but the young and inexperienced Tewfik, the nominee of the rival western powers, was unable to bridle the restless spirits of the army, who looked around them for means to strengthen their position at the expense of their rivals. These jealousies were inflamed by the youthful caprice of Tewfik. At first he extended great favour to Ali Fehmi, an officer of fellahin descent, only to withdraw it owing to the intrigues of a Circassian rival. Ali Fehmi sought for revenge by forming a cabal with other fellahin colonels, among whom a popular leader soon came to the front. This was Arabi Bey.

Arabi's frame embodied the fine animal qualities of the better class of fellahin, but to these he added mental gifts of no mean order. After imbibing the rather narrow education of a devout Moslem, he formed some acquaintance with Western thought, and from it his facile mind selected a stock of ideas which found ready expression in conversation. His soft, dreamy eyes and fluent speech rarely failed to captivate men of all classes.<sup>1</sup> His popularity endowed the discontented camarilla with new vigour, enabling it to focus all the discontented elements, and to become a movement of almost national import. Yet Arabi was its spokesman, or figurehead, rather than the actual propelling power. He seems to have been to a large extent the dupe of schemers who pushed him on for

<sup>1</sup> Sir D. M. Wallace, *Egypt and the Egyptian Question*, p. 67.

their own advantage. At any rate it is significant that after his fall he declared that British supremacy was the one thing needful for Egypt; and during his old age, passed in Ceylon, he often made similar statements.<sup>1</sup>

The Khedive's Ministers, hearing of the intrigues of the discontented officers, resolved to arrest their chiefs; but on the secret leaking out, the offenders turned the tables on the authorities, and with soldiers at their back demanded the dismissal of the Minister of War and the redress of their chief grievance—the undue promotion of Turks and Circassians.

The Khedive felt constrained to yield, and agreed to the appointment of a Minister of War who was a secret friend of the plotters. They next ventured on a military demonstration in front of the Khedive's palace, with a view to extorting the dismissal of the able and energetic Prime Minister, Riaz Pasha. Again Tewfik yielded, and consented to the appointment of the weak and indolent Sherif Pasha. To consolidate their triumph the mutineers now proposed measures which would please the populace. Chief among them was a plan for instituting a consultative National Assembly. This would serve as a check on the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Morley says (*Life of Gladstone*, iii., p. 73) that Arabi's movement "was in truth national as well as military; it was anti-European, and above all, it was in its objects anti-Turk." In view of the evidence collected by Sir D. M. Wallace, and by Lord Milner (*England in Egypt*), I venture to question these statements. The movement clearly was military and anti-Turk in its beginning. Later on it sought support in the people, and became anti-European and to some extent national; but to that extent it ceased to be anti-Turk. Besides, why should the Sultan have encouraged it? How far it genuinely relied on the populace must for the present remain in doubt; but it may be noted that Sir Arthur Milner asserted that, "there are probably few countries in which patriotic sentiment counts for less than in Egypt."

Dual Control and on the young Khedive, whom it had placed in his present ambiguous position.

A Chamber of Notables met in the closing days of 1881, and awakened great hopes, not only in Egypt, but among all who saw hope in the feeling of nationality and in a genuine wish for reform among a Moslem people. What would have happened had the Notables been free to work out the future of Egypt it is impossible to say. The fate of the young Turkish party and of Midhat's constitution of December, 1877, formed by no means a hopeful augury. In the abstract there is much to be said for the two chief demands of the Notables—that the Khedive's Ministers should be responsible to the people's representatives, and that the Dual Control of Great Britain and France should be limited to the control of the revenues set apart for the purposes of the Egyptian public debt. The petitioners, however, ignored the fact that democracy could scarcely be expected to work successfully in a land where not one man in a hundred had the least notion what it meant, and, further, that the Western Powers would not give up their coign of vantage at the bidding of Notables who really represented little more than the dominant military party. Besides, the acts of this party stamped it as Oriental even while it masqueraded in the garb of Western democracy. Having grasped the reins of government, the fellahin colonels proceeded to relegate their Turkish and Circassian rivals to service at Khartum—an ingenious form of banishment. Against this and other despotic acts the representatives of Great Britain and France energetically protested, and, seeing that the Khedive was helpless, they brought up ships of war to make a demonstration against the *de facto* governors of Egypt.

It should be noted that these steps were taken by the Gladstone and Gambetta Cabinets, which were not likely to intervene against a genuinely democratic movement merely in the interests of British and French bondholders. On January 7, 1882, the two Cabinets sent a joint note to the Khedive assuring him of their support and of their desire to remove all grievances, external and internal alike, that threatened the existing order.<sup>1</sup>

While, however, the Western Powers sided with the Khedive, the other European States, including Turkey, began to show signs of impatience and annoyance at any intervention on their part. Russia saw the chance of revenge on England for the events of 1878, and Bismarck sought to gain the favour of the Sultan. As for that potentate, his conduct was as tortuous as usual. From the outset he gave secret support to Arabi's party, probably with the view of undermining the Dual Control and the Khedive's dynasty alike. He doubtless saw that Turkish interests might ultimately be furthered even by the men who had imprisoned or disgraced Turkish officers and Ministers.

Possibly the whole question might have been peaceably solved had Gambetta remained in power; for he was strongly in favour of a joint Anglo-French intervention in case the disorders continued. The Gladstone Government at that time demurred to such intervention, and claimed that it would come more legally from Turkey, or, if this were undesirable, from all the Powers; but this divergence of view did not prevent the two Governments from acting together on several matters. Gambetta, however, fell

<sup>1</sup> For Gambetta's despatches see de Freycinet, *op. cit.*, pp. 209 *et seq.*

from power at the end of January, 1882, and his far weaker successor, de Freycinet, having to face a most complex parliamentary situation in France and the possible hostility of the other Powers, drew back from the leading position which Gambetta's bolder policy had accorded to France. The vacillations at Paris tended alike to weaken Anglo-French action and to encourage the Arabi party and the Sultan. As matters went from bad to worse in Egypt, the British Foreign Minister, Lord Granville, proposed on May 24th that the Powers should sanction an occupation of Egypt by Turkish troops. To this M. de Freycinet demurred, and, while declaring that France would not send an expedition, proposed that a European Conference should be held on the Egyptian Question.

The Gladstone Cabinet at once agreed to this, and the Conference met for a short time at the close of June, but without the participation of Turkey.<sup>1</sup> For the Sultan, hoping that the divisions of the Powers would enable him to restore Turkish influence in Egypt, now set his emissaries to work to arouse there the Moslem fanaticism which he has so profitably exploited in all parts of his Empire. A Turkish commission had been sent to inquire into matters—with the sole result of enriching the chief commissioner. In brief, thanks to the perplexities and hesitations of the Western Powers and the ill-humour manifested by Germany and Russia, Europe was helpless, and the Arabi party felt that they had the game in their own hands. Bismarck said to his secretary, Busch, on June 8th: "They [the British] set about the affair in an awkward way, and have got on a wrong track by sending their ironclads to Alexandria, and now, finding that there is nothing to be

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, iii., p. 79.

done, they want the rest of Europe to help them out of their difficulty by means of a Conference.”<sup>1</sup>

Already, on May 27th, the Egyptian malcontents had ventured on a great military demonstration against the Khedive, which led to Arabi being appointed Minister of War. His followers also sought to inflame the hatred to foreigners for which the greed of Greek and Jewish usurers was so largely responsible. The results perhaps surpassed the hopes of the self-styled “Nationalists.” Moslem fanaticism suddenly flashed into flame. On the 11th of June a street brawl between a Moslem and a Maltese led to a fierce rising. The “true believers” attacked the houses of the Europeans, secured a great quantity of loot, and killed about fifty of them, including men from the British squadron. The English party that always calls out for non-intervention made vigorous efforts at that time, and subsequently, to represent this riot and massacre as a mere passing event which did not seriously compromise the welfare of Egypt; but Sir Alfred Milner in his calm and judicial survey of the whole question states that the fears then entertained by Europeans in Egypt “so far from being exaggerated, . . . perhaps even fell short of the danger which was actually impending.”<sup>2</sup>

The events at Alexandria and Tintah made armed intervention inevitable. Nothing could be hoped for from Turkey. The Sultan’s special envoy, Dervish Pasha, had arrived in Egypt only a few days before the outbreak; and after that occurrence Abdul Hamid thought fit to send a decoration to Arabi. Encouraged by the support of Turkey

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of his History*, iii., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *England in Egypt*, p. 16. For details of the massacre and its preconcerted character, see *Parl. Papers, Egypt*, No. 4 (1884).

and by the well-known jealousies of the Powers, the military party now openly prepared to defy Europe. They had some grounds for hope. Every one knew that France was in a very cautious mood, having enough on her hands in Tunis and Algeria, while her relations to England had rapidly cooled.<sup>1</sup> Germany, Russia, and Austria seemed to be acting together according to an understanding arrived at by the three Emperors after their meeting at Danzig in 1881; and Germany had begun that work of favouring the Sultan which enabled her to supplant British influence at Constantinople. Accordingly, few persons, least of all Arabi, believed that the Gladstone Cabinet would dare to act alone and strike a decisive blow. But they counted wrongly. Gladstone's toleration in regard to foreign affairs was large-hearted, but it had its limits. He now declared in Parliament that Arabi had thrown off the mask and was evidently working to depose the Khedive and oust all Europeans from Egypt; England would intervene to prevent this—if possible with the authority of Europe, with the support of France, and the co-operation of Turkey; but, if necessary, alone.<sup>2</sup>

Even this clear warning was lost on Arabi and his following. Believing that Britain was too weak, and her Ministry too vacillating, to make good these threats, they proceeded to arm the populace and strengthen the forts of Alexandria. Sir Beauchamp Seymour, now at the head of

<sup>1</sup> For the reasons of de Freycinet's caution, see his work, chap. iii., especially pp. 236 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> See, too, Gladstone's speech of July 25, 1882, in which he asserted that there was not a shred of evidence to support Arabi's claim to be the leader of a national party; also his letter of July 14 to John Bright, quoted by Mr. Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, iii., pp. 84-85.



a strong squadron, reported to London that these works were going on in a threatening manner, and on July 6th sent a demand to Arabi that the operations should cease at once. To this Arabi at once acceded. Nevertheless, the searchlight, when suddenly turned on, showed that work was going on at night. A report of an Egyptian officer was afterwards found in one of the forts, in which he complained of the use of the electric light by the English as distinctly discourteous. It may here be noted that M. de Freycinet, in his jaundiced survey of British action at this time, seeks to throw doubt on the resumption of work by Arabi's men. But Admiral Seymour's reports leave no loop-hole for doubt. Finally, on July 10th, the admiral demanded, not only the cessation of hostile preparations, but the surrender of some of the forts into British hands. The French fleet now left the harbour and steamed for Port Said. Most of the Europeans of Alexandria had withdrawn to ships provided for them; and on the morrow, when the last of the twenty-four hours of grace brought no submission, the British fleet opened fire at 7 A.M.

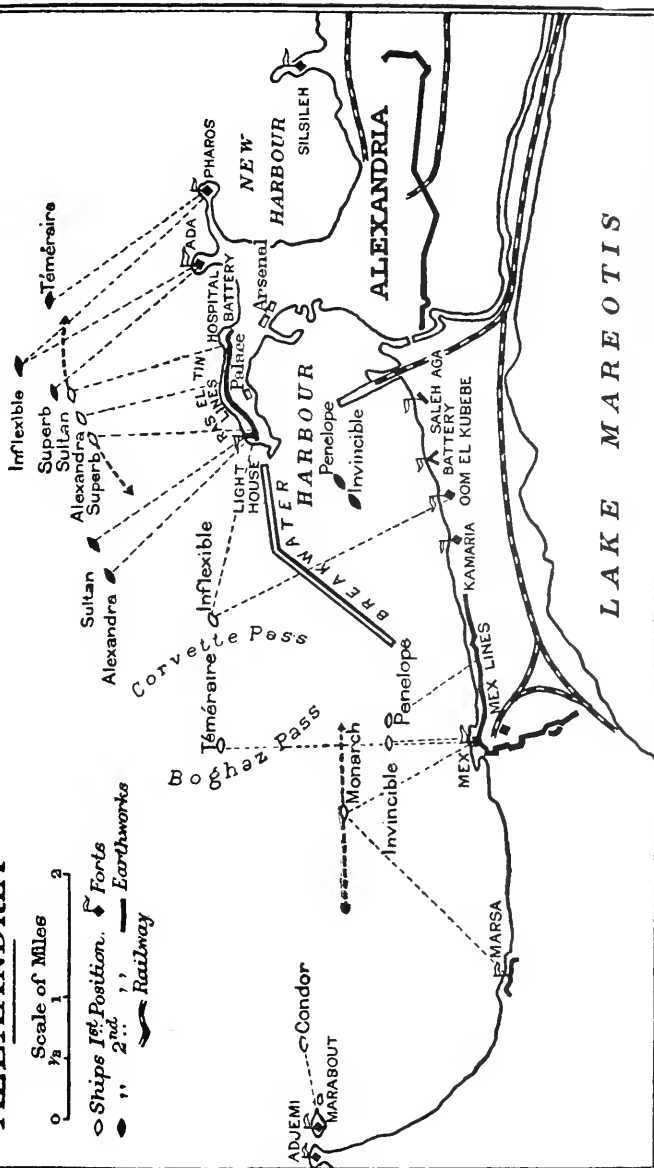
The ensuing action is of great interest as being one of the very few cases in modern warfare where ships have successfully encountered modern forts. The seeming helplessness of the British unarmoured ships before Cronstadt during the Crimean War, their failure before the forts of Sevastopol, and the uselessness of the French navy during the war of 1870, had spread the notion that warships could not overpower modern fortifications. Probably this impression lay at the root of Arabi's defiance. He had some grounds for confidence. The British fleet consisted of eight battleships (of which only the *Inflexible* and *Alexandra* were of great fighting power) along with five unarmoured

vessels. The forts mounted 33 rifled muzzle-loading guns, 3 rifled breach-loaders, and 120 old smooth-bores. The advantage in gun-power lay with the ships, especially as the sailors were by far the better marksmen. Yet so great is the superiority of forts over ships that the engagement lasted five hours or more (7 A.M. till noon) before most of the forts were silenced more or less completely. Fort Pharos continued to fire till 4 P.M. On the whole, the Egyptian gunners stood manfully to their guns. Considering the weight of metal thrown against the forts, namely, 1741 heavy projectiles and 1457 light, the damage done to them was not great, only 27 cannon being silenced completely, and 5 temporarily. On the other hand, the ships were hit only 75 times and lost only 6 killed and 27 wounded. The results show that the comparatively distant cannonades of to-day, even with great guns, are far less deadly than the old sea-fights when ships were locked yard-arm to yard-arm.

Had Admiral Seymour at once landed a force of marines and bluejackets, all the forts would probably have been surrendered at once. For some reason not fully known, this was not done. Spasmodic firing began again in the morning, but a truce was before long arranged, which proved to be only a device for enabling Arabi and his troops to escape. The city, meanwhile, was the scene of a furious outbreak against Europeans, in which some 400 or 500 persons perished. Damage, afterwards assessed at £7,000,000, was done by fire and pillage. It was not till the 14th that the admiral, after receiving reinforcements, felt able to send troops into the city, when a few severe examples cowed the plunderers and restored order. The Khedive, who had shut himself up in his palace at Ramleh, now came

# ALEXANDRIA

Scale of Miles  
 0 1/2 1 2  
 ○ Ships 1st Position.    ⚡ Forts  
 " " " " Earthworks  
 " " " " Railway



back to the seaport under the escort of a British force, and thenceforth remained virtually, though not in name, under British protection.

The bombardment of Alexandria brought about the resignation of that sturdy Quaker and friend of peace, Mr. John Bright, from the Gladstone Ministry; but everything tends to show (as even M. de Freycinet admits) that the crisis took Ministers by surprise. Nothing was ready at home for an important campaign; and it would seem that hostilities resulted, firstly, from the violence of Arabi supporters in Alexandria, and, secondly, from their persistence in warlike preparations which might have endangered the safety of Admiral Seymour's fleet. The situation was becoming like that of 1807 at the Dardanelles, when the Turks gave smooth promises to Admiral Duckworth, all the time strengthening their forts, with very disagreeable results. Probably the analogy of 1807, together with the proven perfidy of Arabi's men, brought on hostilities, which the British Ministers up to the end were anxious to avoid.

In any case, the die was now cast, and England entered questioningly on a task, the magnitude and difficulty of which no one could then foresee. She entered on it alone, and that, too, though the Gladstone Ministry had made pressing overtures for the help of France, at any rate as regarded the protection of the Suez Canal. To this extent de Freycinet and his colleagues were prepared to lend their assistance; but, despite Gambetta's urgent appeal for common action with England at that point, the Chamber of Deputies still remained in a cautiously negative mood, and to that frame of mind M. Clémenceau added strength by a speech ending with a glorification of prudence.

"Europe," he said, "is covered with soldiers; every one is in a state of expectation; all the Powers are reserving their future liberty of action; do you reserve the liberty of action of France?" The restricted co-operation with England which the Cabinet recommended found favour with only seventy-five deputies; and, when face to face with a large hostile majority, de Freycinet and his colleagues resigned (July 29, 1882).<sup>1</sup> Prudence, fear of the newly formed Triple Alliance, or jealousy of England, drew France aside from the path to which her greatest captains, thinkers, and engineers had beckoned her in time past. Whatever the predominant motive may have been, it altered the course of history in the valley of the Nile.

After the refusal of France to co-operate with England even to the smallest extent, the Conference of the Powers became a nullity, and its sessions ceased despite the lack of any formal adjournment.<sup>2</sup> Here, as on so many other occasions, the Conference of the Powers displayed its weakness; and there can be no doubt that the Sultan and Arabi counted on that weakness in playing the dangerous game which brought matters to the test of the sword. The jealousies of the Powers now stood fully revealed. Russia entered a vigorous protest against England's action at Alexandria; Italy evinced great annoyance, and at once repelled a British proposal for her co-operation; Germany also showed much resentment, and turned the situation to profitable account by substituting her influence for that of Britain in the counsels of the Porte. The Sultan, thwarted in the midst of his tortuous intrigues for a great Moslem revival, showed his spleen and his diplomatic skill by loftily

<sup>1</sup> De Freycinet, *op cit.*, pp. 311-312.

<sup>2</sup> For its proceedings, see Parl. Papers, Egypt, 1882 (Conference on Egyptian Affairs).

protesting against Britain's violation of international law, and thereafter by refusing (August 1st) to proclaim Arabi a rebel against the Khedive's authority. The essential timidity of Abdul Hamid's nature in presence of superior force was shown by a subsequent change of front. On hearing of British successes, he placed Arabi under the ban (September 8th).

Meanwhile, the British expedition of some 10,000 men, despatched to Egypt under the command of Sir Garnet Wolseley made as though it would attack Arabi from Alexandria as a base. But on nearing that port at night-fall it steered about and occupied Port Said (August 15th). Kantara and Ismailia, on the canal, were speedily seized; and the Seaforth Highlanders by a rapid march occupied Chalouf and prevented the cutting of the fresh-water canal by the rebels. Thenceforth the little army had the advantage of marching near fresh water, and by a route on which Arabi was not at first expecting them. Sir Garnet Wolseley's movements were of that quick and decisive order which counts for so much against Orientals. A sharp action at Tel-el-Mahuta obliged Arabi's forces, some 10,000 strong, to abandon entrenchments thrown up at that point (August 24th).

Four days later there was desperate fighting at Kassassin Lock on the fresh-water canal. There the Egyptians flung themselves in large numbers against a small force sent forward under General Graham to guard that important point. The assailants fought with the recklessness begotten by the proclamation of a holy war against infidels, and for some time the issue remained in doubt. At length, about sundown, three squadrons of the Household Cavalry and the 7th Dragoon Guards, together with four

light guns, were hastily sent forward from the main body in the rear to clinch the affair. General Drury Lowe wheeled this little force round the left flank of the enemy, and, coming up unperceived in the gathering darkness, charged with such fury as to scatter the hostile array in instant rout.<sup>1</sup> The enemy fell back on the entrenchments at Tel-el-Kebir, while the whole British force (including a division from India) concentrated at Kassassin, 17,400 strong, with 61 guns and 6 Gatlings.

The final action took place on September 13th, at Tel-el-Kebir. There Arabi had thrown up a double line of earthworks of some strength, covering about four miles, and lay with a force that has been estimated at 20,000 to 25,000 regulars and 7000 irregulars. Had the assailants marched across the desert and attacked these works by day, they must have sustained heavy losses. Sir Garnet therefore determined to try the effect of a surprise at dawn, and moved his men forward after sunset of the 12th until they came within striking distance of the works. After a short rest they resumed their advance shortly before the time when the first streaks of dawn would appear on the eastern sky. At about 500 yards from the works, the advance was dimly silhouetted against the paling orient. Shortly before five o'clock, an Egyptian rifle rang out a sharp warning, and forthwith the entrenchments spurted forth smoke and flame. At once the British answered by a cheer and a rush over the intervening ground, each regiment eager to be the first to ply the bayonet. The Highlanders, under the command of General Graham, were leading on the left, and therefore won in this race for

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Campaign in Egypt* (War Office), by Col. J. F. Maurice, pp. 62-65.

glory; but on all sides the invaders poured almost simultaneously over the works. For several minutes there was sharp fighting on the parapet; but the British were not to be denied, and drove before them the defenders as a kind of living screen against the fire that came from the second entrenchments; these they carried also, and thrust the whole mass out into the desert.<sup>1</sup> There hundreds of them fell under the sabres of the British cavalry which swept down from the northern end of the lines; but the pursuit was neither prolonged nor sanguinary. Sir Garnet Wolseley was satisfied with the feat of dissolving Arabi's army into an armed or unarmed rabble by a single sharp blow, and now kept horses and men for further eventualities.

By one of those flashes of intuition that mark the born leader of men, the British commander perceived that the whole war might be ended if a force of cavalry pushed on to Cairo and demanded the surrender of its citadel at the moment when the news of the disaster at Tel-el-Kebir unmanned its defenders. The conception must rank as one of the most daring recorded in the annals of war. In the ancient capital of Egypt there were more than 300,000 Moslems, lately aroused to dangerous heights of fanaticism by the proclamation of a "holy war" against infidels. Its great citadel, towering some 250 feet above the city, might seem to bid defiance to all the horsemen of the British army. Finally, Arabi had repaired thither in order to inspire vigour into a garrison numbering some 10,000 men. Nevertheless, Wolseley counted on the moral effect of his victory to level the ramparts of the citadel and to abase the mushroom growth of Arabi's pride.

<sup>1</sup> *Life, Letters, and Diaries of General Sir Gerald Graham* (1901), J. F. Maurice, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-95.



His surmise was more than justified by events. While his Indian contingent pushed on to occupy Zagazig, Sir Drury Lowe, with a force mustering fewer than 500 sabres, pressed towards Cairo by a desert road in order to summon it on the morrow. After halting at Belbeis the troopers gave rein to their steeds, and a ride of nearly 40 miles brought them to the city about sundown. Rumour magnified their numbers, while the fatalism that used to nerve the Moslem in his great days now predisposed him to bow the knee and mutter *Kismet* at the advent of the seemingly predestined masters of Egypt. To this small, wearied, but lordly band Cairo surrendered, and Arabi himself handed over his sword. On the following day the infantry came up and made good this precarious conquest.

In presence of this startling triumph the Press of the Continent sought to find grounds for the belief that Arabi, and Cairo as well, had been secretly bought over by British gold. It is somewhat surprising to find M. de Freycinet<sup>1</sup> repeating to-day this piece of spiteful silliness, which might with as much reason be used to explain away the victories of Clive and Coote, Outram and Havelock. The slanders of continental writers themselves stand in need of explanation. It is to be found in their annoyance at discovering that England had an army which could carry through a difficult campaign to a speedy and triumphant conclusion. Their typical attitude had been that of Bismarck, namely, of exultation at her difficulties and of hope of her discomfiture. Now their tone changed to one of righteous indignation at the irregularity of her conduct in acting on behalf of Europe without any mandate from the Powers, and in using the Suez Canal as a base of operations.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

In this latter respect Britain's conduct was certainly open to criticism.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it is doubtful whether Arabi would have provoked her to action had he not been tacitly encouraged by the other Powers, which, while professing their wish to see order restored in Egypt, in most cases secretly sought to increase her difficulties in undertaking that task. As for the Sultan, he had now trimmed his sails by declaring Arabi a rebel to the Khedive's authority, and in due course that officer was tried, found guilty, and exiled to Ceylon early in 1883. The conduct of France, Germany, and Russia, if we may judge by the tone of their officially inspired Press, was scarcely more straightforward, and was certainly less discreet. On all sides there were diatribes against Britain's high-handed and lawless behaviour, and some German papers affected to believe that Hamburg might next be chosen for bombardment by the British fleet. These outbursts, in the case of Germany, may have been due to Bismarck's desire to please Russia, and secondarily France, in all possible ways. It is doubtful whether he gained this end. Certainly he and his underlings in the Press widened the gulf that now separated the two great Teutonic peoples.

The annoyance of France was more natural. She had made the Suez Canal, and had participated in the Dual Control; but her mistake in not sharing in the work of restoring order was irreparable. Every one in Egypt saw that the control of that country must rest with the Power which had swept away Arabi's Government and re-established the fallen authority of the Khedive. A few persons

<sup>1</sup> It is said, however, that Arabi had warned M. de Lesseps that "the defence of Egypt requires the temporary destruction of the Canal" (Traill, *England, Egypt, and the Sudan*, p. 57). The status of the Canal was defined in 1885. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

in England, even including one member of the Gladstone Administration, Mr. Courtney, urged a speedy withdrawal; but the Cabinet, which had been unwillingly but irresistibly drawn thus far by the force of circumstances, could not leave Egypt a prey to anarchy; and, clearly, the hand that repressed anarchy ruled the country for the time being. It is significant that on April 4, 1883, more than 2600 Europeans in Egypt presented a petition begging that the British occupation might be permanent.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Gladstone, however, and others of his Cabinet, had declared that it would be only temporary, and would, in fact, last only so long as to enable order and prosperity to grow up under the shadow of new and better institutions. These pledges were given with all sincerity, and the Prime Minister and his colleagues evidently wished to be relieved from what was to them a disagreeable burden. The French in Egypt, of course, fastened on these promises, and one of their newspapers, the *Journal Egyptien*, printed them every day at the head of its front columns.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Gladstone, who sought above all things for a friendly understanding with France, keenly felt, even to the end of his career, that the continued occupation of Egypt hindered that most desirable consummation. He was undoubtedly right. The irregularity of England's action in Egypt hampered her international relations at many points; and it may be assigned as one of the causes that brought France into alliance with Russia.

What, then, hindered the fulfilment of Mr. Gladstone's pledges? In the first place, the dog-in-the-manger policy of French officials and publicists increased the difficulties of

<sup>1</sup> Sir A. Milner, *England in Egypt*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> H. F. Wood, *Egypt under the British*, p. 59 (1896).

the British administrators who now, in the character of advisers of the Khedive, really guided him and controlled his Ministers. The scheme of administration adopted was in the main that advised by Lord Dufferin in his capacity of special envoy. The details, however, are too wide and complex to be set forth here. So, also, are those of the disputes between our officials and those of France. Suffice it to say that by shutting up the funds of the "Caisse de la Dette," the French administrators of that great reserve fund hoped to make Britain's position untenable and hasten her evacuation. In point of fact, these and countless other pin-pricks delayed Egypt's recovery and furnished a good reason why Britain should not withdraw.<sup>1</sup>

But above and beyond these administrative details there was one all-compelling cause, the war-cloud that now threatened the land of the Pharaohs from that home of savagery and fanaticism, the Sudan.

<sup>1</sup> The reader should consult for full details Sir A. Milner, *England in Egypt* (1892); Sir D. M. Wallace, *The Egyptian Question* (1883), especially chaps. xi.-xiii.; and A. Silva White, *The Expansion of Egypt* (1899), the best account of the Anglo-Egyptian administration, with valuable Appendices on the "Caisse," etc.

## CHAPTER V

### GORDON AND THE SUDAN

"What were my ideas in coming out? They were these: *Agreed abandonment of Sudan, but extricate the garrisons*; and these were the instructions of the Government."—Gordon's *Journal*, October 8, 1885.

IT is one of the peculiarities of the Moslem faith that any time of revival is apt to be accompanied by warlike fervour somewhat like that which enabled its early votaries to sweep over half of the known world in a single generation. This militant creed becomes dangerous when it personifies itself in a holy man who can make good his claim to be received as a successor of the Prophet. Such a man had recently appeared in the Sudan. It is doubtful whether Mohammed Ahmed was a genuine believer in his own extravagant claims, or whether he adopted them in order to wreak revenge on Rauf Pasha, the Egyptian Governor of the Sudan, for an insult inflicted by one of his underlings. In May, 1881, while living near the island of Abba in the Nile, he put forward his claim to be the Messiah or Prophet, foretold by the founder of that creed. Retiring with some disciples to that island, he gained fame by his fervour and asceticism. His followers named him "El Mahdi," "the leader," but his claims were scouted by the Ulemas of Khartum, Cairo, and Constantinople, on the ground that the Messiah of the Moslems was to arise in

the East. Nevertheless, while the British were crushing Arabi's movement, the Mahdi stirred the Sudan to its depths, and speedily shook the Egyptian rule to its base.<sup>1</sup>

There was every reason to fear a speedy collapse. In the years 1874-76 the Province of the White Nile had known the benefits of just and tactful rule under that born leader of men, Colonel Gordon; and in the three following years, as Governor-General of the Sudan, he gained greater powers, which he felt to be needful for the suppression of the slave-trade and other evils. Ill-health and underhand opposition of various kinds caused him to resign his post in 1879. Then, to the disgust of all, the Khedive named as his successor Rauf Pasha, whom Gordon had recently dismissed for maladministration of the Province of Harrar, on the borders of Abyssinia.<sup>2</sup> Thus the Sudan, after experiencing the benefits of a just and able government, reeled back into the bad old condition, at the time when the Mahdi was becoming a power in the land. No help was forthcoming from Egypt in the summer of 1882, and the Mahdi's revolt rapidly made headway even despite several checks from the Egyptian troops.

Possibly, if Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues had decided to crush it in that autumn, the task might have been easy. But, far from doing so, they sought to dissuade the Khedive from attempting to hold the most disturbed districts, those of Kordofan and Darfur, beyond Khartum. This might

<sup>1</sup> See the Report of the Intelligence Department of the War Office, printed in *The Journals of Major-General C. G. Gordon at Khartum*, Appendix to Bk. iv.

<sup>2</sup> See Gordon's letter of April, 1880, quoted in the Introduction to *The Journals of Major-General C. G. Gordon at Khartum* (1885), p. xvii.

have been the best course, if the evacuation could have been followed at once and without risk of disaster at the hands of the fanatics. But Tewfik willed otherwise. Against the advice of Lord Dufferin, he sought to reconquer the Sudan, and that, too, by wholly insufficient forces. The result was a series of disasters, culminating in the extermination of Hicks Pasha's Egyptian force by the Mahdi's followers near El Obeid, the capital of Kordofan (November 5, 1883).

The details of the disaster are not fully known. Hicks Pasha was appointed, on August 20, 1883, by the Khedive to command the expedition into that province. He set out from Omdurman on September 9th, with 10,000 men, 4 Krupp guns, and 16 light guns, 500 horses and 5500, camels. His last despatch, dated October 3rd, showed that the force had been greatly weakened by want of water and provisions, and most of all by the spell cast on the troops by the Mahdi's claim to invincibility. Nevertheless, Hicks checked the rebels in two or three encounters, but, according to the tale of one of the few survivors, a camel-driver, the force finally succumbed to a fierce charge on the Egyptian square at the close of an exhausting march, prolonged by the treachery of native guides. Nearly the whole force was put to the sword. Hicks Pasha perished, along with five British and four German officers, and many Egyptians of note. The adventurous newspaper correspondents, O'Donovan and Vizetelly, also met their doom (November 5, 1883).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gordon's *Journals*, pp. 347-351; also Parl. Papers, Egypt, No. 12 (1884), pp. 85 and 127-131 for another account. See, too, Sir F. R. Wingate's *Mahdism*, chaps. i.-iii., for the rise of the Mahdi and his triumph over Hicks.

This catastrophe decided the history of the Sudan for many years. The British Government was in no respect responsible for the appointment of General Hicks to the Kordofan command. Lord Dufferin and Sir E. Malet had strongly urged the Khedive to abandon Kordofan and Darfur; but it would seem that the desire of the governing class at Cairo to have a hand in the Sudan administration overbore these wise remonstrances, and hence the disaster near El Obeid with its long train of evil consequences.<sup>1</sup> It was speedily followed by another reverse at Tokar, not far from Suakim, where the slave-raiders and tribesmen of the Red Sea coast exterminated another force, under the command of Captain Moncrieff.

The Gladstone Ministry and the British advisers of the Khedive, among whom was Sir Evelyn Baring (the present Lord Cromer), again urged the entire evacuation of the Sudan, and the limitation of Egyptian authority to the strong position of the First Cataract at Assuan. This policy then received the entire approval of the man who was to be alike the hero and the martyr of that enterprise.<sup>2</sup> But how were the Egyptian garrisons to be withdrawn? It was a point of honour not to let them be slaughtered or enslaved by the cruel fanatics of the Mahdi. Yet under the lead of Egyptian officers they would almost certainly suffer one of these fates. A way of escape was suggested—by a London evening newspaper in the first instance. The name of Gordon was renowned for justice and hardihood all through the Sudan. Let this knight-errant be sent—so said this Mentor of the Press—and his strange

<sup>1</sup> J. Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, iii., p. 146; Sir A. Lyall, *Life of Lord Dufferin*, ii., chap. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, iii., p. 147.



power over men would accomplish the impossible. The proposal carried conviction everywhere, and Lord Granville, who generally followed any strong lead, sent for the General.

Charles George Gordon, born at Woolwich in 1833, was the scion of a staunch race of Scottish fighters. His great-grandfather served under Cope at Prestonpans; his grandfather fought in Boscawen's expedition at Louisburg and under Wolfe at Quebec. His father attained the rank of Lieutenant-General. From his mother, too, he derived qualities of self-reliance and endurance of no mean order. Despite the fact that she had eleven children, and that three of her sons were out at the Crimea, she is said never to have quailed during that dark time. Of these sons, Charles George was serving in the Engineers; he showed at his first contact with war an aptitude and resource which won the admiration of all. "We used always to send him out to find what new move the Russians were making"—such was the testimony of one of his superior officers. Of his subsequent duties in delimiting the new Bessarabian frontier and his miraculous career in China we cannot speak in detail. By the consent of all, it was his soldierly spirit that helped to save that Empire from anarchy at the hands of the Taeping rebels, whose movement presented a strange medley of perverted Christianity, communism, and freebooting. There it was that his magnetic influence over men first had free play. Though he was only thirty years of age, his fine physique, dauntless daring, and the spirit of unquestionable authority that looked out from his kindly eyes, gained speedy control over the motley set of officers and the Chinese rank and file—half of them ex-rebels—that formed the nucleus of the "ever victorious

army." What wonder that he was thenceforth known as "Chinese Gordon"?

In the years 1865-71, which he spent at Gravesend in supervising the construction of the new forts at the mouth of the river, the religious and philanthropic side of his character found free play. His biographer, Mr. Hake, tells of his interest in the poor and suffering, and, above all, in friendless boys, who came to idolise his manly yet sympathetic nature. Called thereafter by the Khedive to succeed Sir Samuel Baker in the Governorship of the Sudan, he grappled earnestly with the fearful difficulties that beset all who have attempted to put down the slave-trade in its chief seat of activity. Later on he expressed the belief that "the Sudan is a useless possession, ever was so, ever will be so." These words, and certain episodes in his official career in India and in Cape Colony, revealed the weak side of a singularly noble nature. Occasionally he was hasty and impulsive in his decisions, and the pride of his race would then flash forth. During his cadetship at Woolwich he was rebuked for incompetence, and told that he would never make an officer. At once he tore the epaulets from his shoulders and flung them at his superior's feet. A certain impatience of control characterised him throughout life. No man was ever more chivalrous, more conscientious, more devoted, or abler in the management of inferiors; but his abilities lay rather in the direction of swift intuitions and prompt achievement than in sound judgment and plodding toil. In short, his qualities were those of a knight-errant, not those of a statesman. The imperious calls of conscience and of instinct endowed him with powers uniquely fitted to attract and enthral simple, straightforward natures, and to sway Orientals at his will.

But the empire of conscience, instinct, and will-power consorts but ill with those diplomatic gifts of effecting a timely compromise which go far to make for success in life. This was at once the strength and the weakness of Gordon's being. In the midst of a *blasé*, sceptical age, his personality stood forth, God-fearing as that of a Covenanter, romantic as that of a Cœur de Lion, tender as that of a Florence Nightingale. In truth, it appealed to all that is most elemental in man.

At that time Gordon was charged by the King of the Belgians to proceed to the Congo River to put down the slave-trade. Imagination will persist in wondering what might have been the result if he had carried out this much-needed duty. Possibly he might have acquired such an influence as to direct the "Congo Free State" to courses far other than those to which it has come. He himself discerned the greatness of the opportunity. In his letter of January 6, 1884, to H. M. Stanley, he stated that "no such efficacious means of cutting at root of slave-trade ever was presented as that which God has opened out to us through the kind disinterestedness of His Majesty."

The die was now cast against the Congo and for the Nile. Gordon had a brief interview with four members of the Cabinet—Lords Granville, Hartington, Northbrooke, and Sir Charles Dilke,—Mr. Gladstone was absent at Hawarden; and they forthwith decided that he should go to the upper Nile. What transpired in that most important meeting is known only from Gordon's account of it in a private letter :

"At noon he, Wolseley, came to me and took me to the Ministers. He went in and talked to the Ministers, and came back and said: 'Her Majesty's Government wants you

to undertake this. Government is determined to evacuate the Sudan, for they will not guarantee future government. Will you go and do it?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Go in.' I went in and saw them. They said, 'Did Wolseley tell you our orders?' I said, 'Yes.' I said, 'You will not guarantee future government of the Sudan, and you wish me to go up to evacuate now?' They said, 'Yes,' and it was over, and I left at 8 p.m. for Calais."

Before seeing the Ministers, Gordon had a long interview with Lord Wolseley, who in the previous autumn had been named Baron Wolseley of Cairo. That conversation is also unknown to us, but obviously it must have influenced Gordon's impressions as to the scope of the duties sketched for him by the Cabinet. We turn, then, to the "Instructions to General Gordon," drawn up by the Ministry on January 18, 1884. They directed him to "proceed at once to Egypt, to report to them on the military situation in the Sudan, and on the measures which it may be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons still holding positions in that country and for the safety of the European population in Khartum." He was also to report on the best mode of effecting the evacuation of the interior of the Sudan and on measures that might be taken to counteract the consequent spread of the slave-trade. He was to be under the instructions of H.M.'s Consul-General at Cairo (Sir Evelyn Baring). There followed this sentence: "You will consider yourself authorised and instructed to perform such other duties as the Egyptian Government may desire to entrust to you, and as may be communicated to you by Sir Evelyn Baring."<sup>1</sup>

After receiving these instructions, Gordon started at

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Egypt, No. 2 (1884), p. 3.

once for Egypt, accompanied by Colonel Stewart. At Cairo he had an interview with Sir Evelyn Baring, and was appointed by the Khedive Governor-General of the Sudan. The firman of January 26th contained these words: "We trust that you will carry out our good intentions for the establishment of justice and order, and that you will assure the peace and prosperity of the people of the Sudan by maintaining the security of the roads, etc." It contained not a word about the evacuation of the Sudan, nor did the Khedive's proclamation of the same date to the Sudanese. The only reference to evacuation was in his letter of the same date to Gordon, beginning thus: "You are aware that the object of your arrival here and of your mission to the Sudan is to carry into execution the evacuation of those territories and to withdraw our troops, civil officials, and such of the inhabitants, together with their belongings, as may wish to leave for Egypt. . . ." After completing this task he was to "take the necessary steps for establishing an organised Government in the different provinces of the Sudan for the maintenance of order and the cessation of all disasters and incitement to revolt."<sup>1</sup> How Gordon, after sending away all the troops, was to pacify that enormous territory His Highness did not explain.

There is almost as much ambiguity in the "further instructions" which Sir Evelyn Baring drew up on January 25th at Cairo. After stating that the British and Egyptian Governments had agreed on the necessity of "evacuating" the Sudan, he noted the fact that Gordon approved of it and thought it should on no account be changed; the despatch proceeds:

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Egypt, No. 12 (1884), pp. 27, 28.

“You consider that it may take a few months to carry it out with safety. You are further of opinion that ‘the restoration of the country should be made to the different petty Sultans who existed at the time of Mohammed Ali’s conquest, and whose families still exist’; and that an endeavour should be made to form a confederation of those Sultans. In this view the Egyptian Government entirely concurs. It will of course be fully understood that the Egyptian troops are not to be kept in the Sudan merely with a view to consolidating the powers of the new rulers of the country. But the Egyptian Government has the fullest confidence in your judgment, your knowledge of the country, and your comprehension of the general line of policy to be pursued. You are therefore given full discretionary power to retain the troops for such reasonable period as you may think necessary, in order that the abandonment of the country may be accomplished with the least possible risk to life and property. A credit of £100,000 has been opened for you at the Finance Department. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

In themselves these instructions were not wholly clear. An officer who is allowed to use troops for the settlement or pacification of a vast tract of country can hardly be the agent of a policy of mere “abandonment.” Neither Gordon nor Baring seems at that time to have felt the incongruity of the two sets of duties, but before long it flashed across Gordon’s mind. At Abu Hammed, when nearing Khartum, he telegraphed to Baring: “I would most earnestly beg that evacuation but not abandonment be the programme to be followed.” Or, as he phrased it, he wanted Egypt to recognise her “moral control and suze-

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Egypt, No. 6 (1884), p. 3.

rainy" over the Sudan.<sup>1</sup> This, of course, was an extension of the programme to which he gave his assent at Cairo; it differed *toto cælo* from the policy of abandonment laid down at London.

Even now it is impossible to see why Ministers did not at once simplify the situation by a clear statement of their orders to Gordon, not, of course, as Governor-General of the Sudan, but as a British officer charged by them with a definite duty. At a later date they sought to limit him to the restricted sphere sketched out at London; but then it was too late to bend to their will a nature which, firm at all times, was hard as adamant when the voice of conscience spoke within. Already it had spoken, and against "abandonment."

There were other confusing elements in the situation. Gordon believed that the "full discretionary power" granted to him by Sir E. Baring was a promise binding on the British Government; and, seeing that he was authorised to perform such other duties as Sir Evelyn Baring would communicate to him, he was right. But Ministers do not seem to have understood that this implied an immense widening of the original programme. Further, Sir Evelyn Baring used the terms "evacuation" and "abandonment" as if they were synonymous, while in Gordon's view they were very different. As we shall see, his nature, at once conscientious, vehement, and pertinacious, came to reject the idea of abandonment as cowardly and therefore impossible.

Lastly, we may note that Gordon was left free to announce the forthcoming evacuation of the Sudan, or not, as he judged best.<sup>2</sup> He decided to keep it secret. Had

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Egypt, No. 12 (1884), p. 133.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

he kept it entirely so for the present, he would have done well, but he is said to have divulged it to one or two officials at Berber; if so, it was a very regrettable imprudence, which compromised the defence of that town. But surely no man was ever charged with duties so complex and contradictory. The qualities of Nestor, Ulysses, and Achilles combined in one mortal could scarcely have availed to untie or sever that knot.

The first sharp collision between Gordon and the Home Government resulted from his urgent request for the employment of Zebehr Pasha as the future ruler of the Sudan. A native of the Sudan, this man had risen to great wealth and power by his energy and ambition, and figured as a kind of king among the slave-raiders of the upper Nile, until, for some offence against the Egyptian Government, he was interned at Cairo. At that city Gordon had a conference with Zebehr in the presence of Sir E. Baring, Nubar Pasha, and others. It was long and stormy, and gave the impression of undying hatred felt by the slaver for the slave-liberator. This alone seemed to justify the Gladstone Ministry in refusing Gordon's request.<sup>1</sup> Had Zebehr gone with Gordon, he would certainly have betrayed him—so thought Sir Evelyn Baring.

Setting out from Cairo and travelling quickly up the Nile, Gordon reached Khartum on February 18th, and received an enthusiastic welcome from the discouraged populace. At once he publicly burned all instruments of torture and records of old debts; so that his popularity overshadowed that of the Mahdi. Again he urged the despatch of Zebehr as his "successor," after the withdrawal of troops and civilians from the Sudan. But, as

<sup>1</sup> Egypt, pp. 38-41.



Sir Evelyn Baring said in forwarding Gordon's request to Downing Street, it would be most dangerous to place them together at Khartum. It should further be noted that Gordon's telegrams showed his belief that the Mahdi's power was overrated, and that his advance in person on Khartum was most unlikely.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising, then, that Lord Granville telegraphed to Sir E. Baring on February 22nd that the public opinion of England "would not tolerate the appointment of Zebehr Pasha."<sup>2</sup> Already it had been offended by Gordon's proclamation at Khartum that the Government would not interfere with the buying and selling of slaves, though, as Sir Evelyn Baring pointed out, the re-establishment of slavery resulted quite naturally from the policy of evacuation; and he now strongly urged that Gordon should have "full liberty of action to complete the execution of his general plans."<sup>3</sup>

Here it is desirable to remember that the Mahdist movement was then confined almost entirely to three chief districts—Kordofan, parts of the lands adjoining the Blue Nile, and the tribes dwelling west and south-west of Suakim. For the present these last were the most dangerous. Already they had overpowered and slaughtered two Egyptian forces; and on February 22nd news reached Cairo of the fall of Tokar before the valiant swordsmen of Osman Digna. But this was far away from the Nile and did not endanger Gordon. British troops were landed at Suakim for the protection of that port, but this step implied no change of policy respecting the Sudan. The slight impression which two brilliant but costly victories, those of El Teb and Tamai, made on the warlike tribes at the back of Suakim certainly showed the need of caution in pushing

<sup>1</sup> Egypt, pp. 74, 82, 88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

a force into the Sudan when the fierce heats of summer were coming on.<sup>1</sup>

The first hint of any change of policy was made by Gordon in his despatch of February 26th, to Sir E. Baring. After stating his regret at the refusal of the British Government to allow the despatch of Zebehr as his successor, he used these remarkable words:

"You must remember that when evacuation is carried out, Mahdi will come down here, and, by agents, will not let Egypt be quiet. Of course my duty is evacuation, and the best I can for establishing a quiet government. The first I hope to accomplish. The second is a more difficult task, and concerns Egypt more than me. If Egypt is to be quiet, Mahdi must be smashed up. Mahdi is most unpopular, and with care and time could be smashed. Remember that once Khartum belongs to Mahdi, the task will be far more difficult; yet you will, for the safety of Egypt, execute it. If you decide on smashing Mahdi, then send up another £100,000 and send up 200 Indian troops to Wady Halfa, and send officer up to Dongola under pretence to look out quarters for troops. Leave Suakim and Massowah alone. I repeat that evacuation is possible, but you will feel effect in Egypt, and will be forced to enter into a far more serious affair in order to guard Egypt. At present, it would be comparatively easy to destroy Mahdi." <sup>2</sup>

This statement arouses different opinions according to the point of view from which we regard it. As a declaration of general policy it is no less sound than prophetic; as a despatch from the Governor-General of the Sudan to

<sup>1</sup> For details of these battles, see Sir F. Wingate's *Mahdism*, chap. iii., and *Life of Sir Gerald Graham* (1901).

<sup>2</sup> Egypt, No. 12 (1884), p. 115.

the Egyptian Government, it claimed serious attention; as a recommendation sent by a British officer to the Home Government, it was altogether beyond his powers. Gordon was sent out for a distinct aim; he now proposed to subordinate that aim to another far vaster aim which lay beyond his province. Nevertheless, Sir E. Baring on February 28th, and on March 4th, urged the Gladstone Ministry even now to accede to Gordon's request for Zebehr Pasha as his successor, on the ground that some government must be left in the Sudan, and Zebehr was deemed at Cairo to be the only possible governor. Again the Home Government refused, and thereby laid themselves under the moral obligation of suggesting an alternate course. The only course suggested was to allow the despatch of a British force up the Nile, if occasion seemed to demand it.<sup>1</sup>

In this connection it is well to remember that the question of Egypt and the Sudan was only one of many that distracted the attention of Ministers. The events outside Suakim alone might give them pause before they plunged into the Sudan; for that was the time when Russia was moving on towards Afghanistan; and the agreement between the three Emperors imposed the need of caution on a State as isolated and unpopular as England then was. In view of the designs of the German colonial party (see Vol. II., Chapter VI.) and the pressure of the Irish problem, the Gladstone Cabinet was surely justified in refusing to undertake any new responsibilities, except on the most urgent need. Vital interests were at stake in too many places to warrant a policy of Quixotic adventure up the Nile.

Nevertheless, it is regrettable that Ministers took upon

<sup>1</sup> Egypt, p. 119.

the Sudan problem a position that was logically sound but futile in the sphere of action. Gordon's mission, according to Earl Granville, was a peaceful one, and he inquired anxiously what progress had been made in the withdrawal of the Egyptian garrisons and civilians. This question he put, even in the teeth of Gordon's positive statement in a telegram of March 8th:

"If you do not send Zebehr, you have no chance of getting the garrisons away; . . . Zebehr here would be far more powerful than the Mahdi, and he would make short work of the Mahdi."<sup>1</sup>

A week earlier Gordon had closed a telegram with the despairing words:

"I will do my best to carry out my instructions, but I feel conviction I shall be caught in Khartum."<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising that Ministers were perplexed by Gordon's despatches, or that Baring telegraphed to Khartum that he found it very difficult to understand what the General wanted. All who now peruse his despatches must have the same feeling, mixed with one of regret that he ever weakened his case by the proposal to "smash the Mahdi." Thenceforth the British Government obviously felt some distrust of its envoy; and in this disturbing factor, and the duality of Gordon's duties, we may discern one cause at least of the final disaster.

On March 11th, the British Government refused either to allow the appointment of Zebehr or to send British or Indian troops from Suakim to Berber. Without wishing to force Gordon's hand prematurely, Earl Granville urged the need of evacuation at as early a date as might be practicable. On March 16th, after hearing ominous news as

<sup>1</sup> Egypt, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

to the spread of the Mahdi's power near to Khartum and Berber, he advised the evacuation of the former city at the earliest possible date.<sup>1</sup> We may here note that the rebels began to close round it on March 18th.

Earl Granville's advice directly conflicted with Gordon's sense of honour. As he stated, on or about March 20th, the fidelity of the people of Khartum, while treachery was rife all around, bound him not to leave them until he could do so "under a Government which would give them some hope of peace." Here again his duty as Governor of the Sudan, or his extreme conscientiousness as a man, held him to his post despite the express recommendations of the British Government. His decision is ever to be regretted; but it redounds to his honour as a Christian and a soldier. At bottom, the misunderstanding between him and the Cabinet rested on a divergent view of duty. Gordon summed up his scruples in his telegram to Baring:

"You must see that you could not recall me, nor could I possibly obey, until the Cairo *employés* get out from all the places. I have named men to different places, thus involving them with the Mahdi. How could I look the world in the face if I abandoned them and fled? As a gentleman, could you advise this course?"

Earl Granville summed up his statement of the case in the words:

"The Mission of General Gordon, as originally designed and decided upon, was of a pacific nature and in no way involved any movement of British forces. . . . He was, in addition, authorised and instructed to perform such other duties as the Egyptian Government might desire to entrust to him and as might be communicated by

<sup>1</sup> Egypt, pp. 158, 162, 166.

you to him. . . . Her Majesty's Government, bearing in mind the exigencies of the occasion, concurred in these instructions [those of the Egyptian Government], which virtually altered General Gordon's Mission from one of advice to that of executing, or at least directing, the evacuation not only of Khartum but of the whole Sudan, and they were willing that General Gordon should receive the very extended powers conferred upon him by the Khedive to enable him to effect his difficult task. But they have throughout joined in your anxiety that he should not expose himself to unnecessary personal risk, or place himself in a position from which retreat would be difficult."<sup>1</sup>

He then states that it is clear that Khartum can hold out for at least six months, if it is attacked, and, seeing that the British occupation of Egypt was only "for a special and temporary purpose," any expedition into the Sudan would be highly undesirable on general as well as diplomatic grounds.

Both of these views of duty are intelligible as well as creditable to those who held them. But the former view is that of a high-souled officer; the latter, that of a responsible and much-tried Minister and diplomatist. They were wholly divergent, and divergence there spelt disaster.

On hearing of the siege of Khartum, General Stephenson, then commanding the British forces in Egypt, advised the immediate despatch of a brigade to Dongola—a step which would probably have produced the best results; but that advice was overruled at London for the reasons stated above. Ministers seem to have feared that Gordon might use the force for offensive purposes. An Egyptian battalion was sent up the Nile to Korosko in the middle of May,

<sup>1</sup> Egypt, No. 13 (1884), pp. 5, 6. Earl Granville made the same statement in his despatch of April 23.

but the "moral effect" hoped for from that daring step vanished in face of a serious reverse. On May 19th the important city of Berber was taken by the Mahdists.<sup>1</sup>

Difficult as the removal of about 10,000 to 15,000<sup>2</sup> Egyptians from Khartum had always been—and there were fifteen other garrisons to be rescued—it was now next to impossible, unless some blow were dealt at the rebels in that neighbourhood. The only effective blow would be that dealt by British or Indian troops, and this the Government refused, though Gordon again and again pointed out that a small well-equipped force would do far more than a large force. "A heavy, lumbering column, however strong, is nowhere in this land [so he wrote in his *Journals* on September 24th]. . . . It is the country of the irregular, not of the regular." A month after the capture of Berber a small British force left Siut, on the Nile, for Assuan; but this move, which would have sent a thrill through the Sudan in March, had little effect at mid-summer. Even so, a prompt advance on Dongola and thence on Berber would probably have saved the situation at the eleventh hour.

But first the battle of the routes had to be fought out by the military authorities. As early as April 25th, the Government ordered General Stephenson to report on the best means of relieving Gordon; after due consideration of this difficult problem he advised the despatch of 10,000 men to Berber from Suakim in the month of September. Preparations were actually begun at Suakim; but in July experts began to favour the Nile route. In that month

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Egypt, No. 25 (1884), pp. 129-131.

<sup>2</sup> This is the number as estimated by Gordon in his *Journals* (September 10, 1884), p. 6.

Lord Wolseley urged the immediate despatch of a force up that river, and he promised that it should be at Dongola by the middle of October. Even so, official hesitations hampered the enterprise, and it was not until July 29th that the decision seems to have been definitely formed in favour of the Nile route. Even on August 8th, Lord Hartington, then War Minister, stated that help would be sent to Gordon, *if it proved to be necessary*.<sup>1</sup> On August 26th, Lord Wolseley was appointed to the command of the relief expedition gathering on the Nile, but not until October 5th did he reach Wady Halfa, below the Second Cataract.

Meanwhile the web of fate was closing in on Khartum. In vain did Gordon seek to keep communications open. All that he could do was to hold stoutly to that last bulwark of civilisation. There were still some grounds for hope. The Mahdi remained in Kordofan, want of food preventing his march northwards in force. Against his half-armed fanatics the city opposed a strong barrier. "Crows' feet" scattered on the ground ended their mad rushes, and mines blew them into the air by hundreds. Khartum seemed to defy these sons of the desert. The fire of the steamers drove them from the banks and pulverised their forts.<sup>2</sup> The arsenal could turn out fifty thousand Remington cartridges a week. There was every reason, then, for holding the city; for, as Gordon jotted down in his *Journal* on September 17th, if the Mahdi took Khartum, it would need a great force to stay his propaganda. Here and there in those pathetic records of a life-and-death struggle we catch a glimpse of Gordon's hope

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, iii., p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see *Letters from Khartum*, by Frank Power.

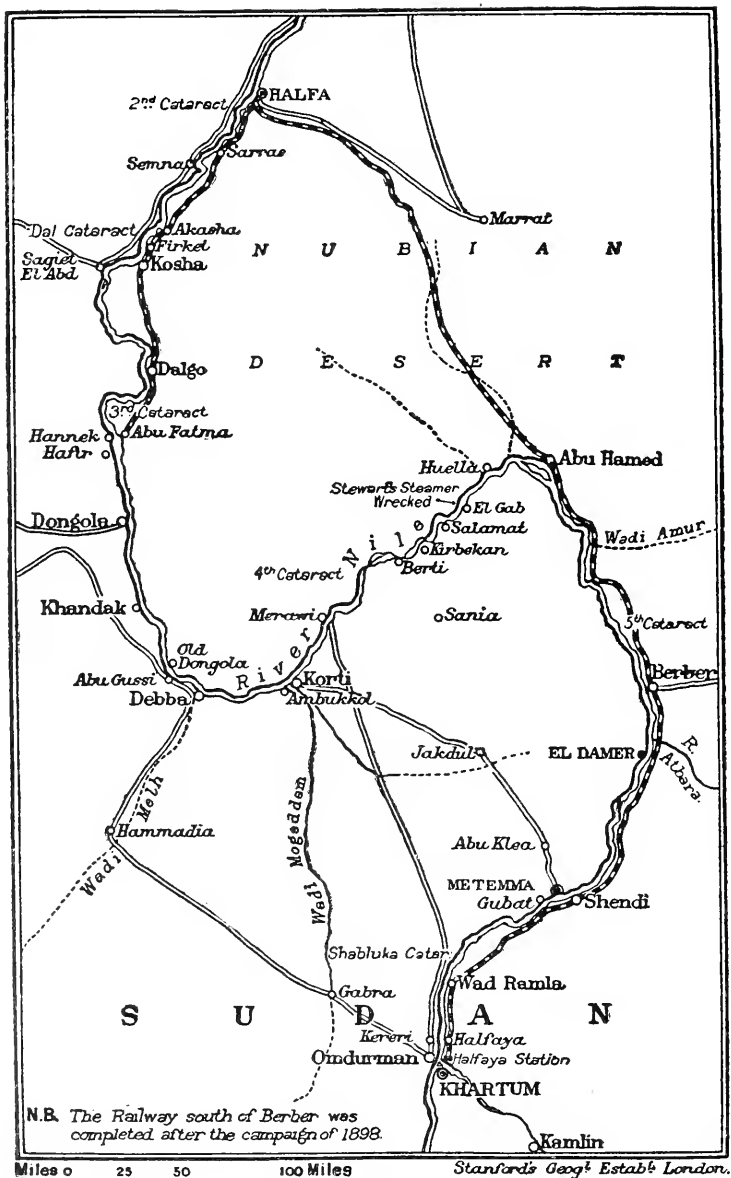


of saving Khartum for civilisation. More than once he noted the ease of holding the Sudan from the Nile as base. With forts at the cataracts and armed steamers patrolling the clear reaches of the river, the defence of the Sudan, he believed, was by no means impossible.<sup>1</sup>

On September 10th he succeeded in sending away down stream by steamer Colonel Stewart and Messrs. Power and Herbin; but unfortunately they were wrecked and murdered by Arabs near Korti. The advice and help of that gallant officer would have been of priceless service to the relieving force. On September 10th, when the *Journals* begin, Gordon was still hopeful of success, though food was scarce.

At this time the rescue expedition was mustering at Wady Halfa, a point which the narrowing gorge of the Nile marks out as one of the natural defences of its lower valley. There the British and Egyptian Governments were collecting a force that soon amounted to 2570 British troops and some Egyptians, who were to be used solely for transport and portage duties. A striking tribute to the solidarity of the Empire was the presence of 350 Canadians, mostly French, whose skill in working boats up rapids won admiration on all sides. The difficulties of the Nile route were soon found to be far greater than had been imagined. Indeed many persons still believe that the Suakim-Berber route would have been far preferable. The Nile was unfortunately lower than usual, and many rapids, up which small steamers had been hauled when the waters ran deep and full, were impassable even for the whaleboats on which the expedition depended for its progress as far as Korti. Many a time all the boats had to be hauled up the

<sup>1</sup> *Journals*, p. 35, etc.



MAP OF THE NILE

banks and carried by Canadians or Egyptians to the next clear reaches. The letters written by Gordon in 1877 in a more favourable season were now found to be misleading, and in part led to the miscalculation of time which was to prove so disastrous.

Another untoward fact was the refusal of the authorities to push on the construction of the railway above Sarras. It had been completed from Wady Halfa up to that point, and much work had been done on it for about fifteen miles farther. But, either from lack of the necessary funds, or because the line could not be completed in time, the construction was stopped by Lord Wolseley's orders early in October. Consequently much time was lost in dragging the boats and their stores up or around the difficult rapids above Semneh.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile a large quantity of stores had been collected at Dongola and Debbeh; numbers of boats were also there, so that a swift advance of a vanguard thence by the calmer reaches farther up the Nile seemed to offer many chances of success. It was in accord with Gordon's advice to act swiftly with small columns; but, for some reason, the plan was not acted on, though Colonel Kitchener, who had collected those stores, recommended it. Another argument for speedy action was the arrival on November 14th of a letter from Gordon, dated ten days before, in which he stated that he could hold out for forty days, but would find it hard to do so any longer.

The advance of the main body to Dongola was very slow, despite the heroic toil of all concerned. We now

<sup>1</sup> See Gordon's letters of the year 1877 quoted in the Appendix of A. Macdonald's *Too Late for Gordon and Khartum* (1887); also chap. vi. of that book.

know that up to the middle of September the Gladstone Ministry cherished the belief that the force need not advance beyond Dongola. Their optimism was once again at fault. The Mahdists were pressing on the siege of Khartum, and had overpowered and slaughtered faithful tribes farther down the river. Such was the news sent by Gordon and received by Lord Wolseley on December 31st at Korti. The "secret and confidential" part of Gordon's message was to the effect that food was running short, and the rescuers must come quickly; they should come by Metammeh or Berber, and inform Gordon by the messenger when they had taken Berber.

The last entries in Gordon's *Journals*, or in that part which has survived, contain the following statements:

"December 13. . . . All that is absolutely necessary is for fifty of the expeditionary force to get on board a steamer and come up to Halfeyeh, and thus let their presence be felt; this is not asking much, but it must happen at once; or it will (as usual) be too late.

"December 14. [After stating that he would send down a steamer with the *Journal* towards the expeditionary force]. . . . Now mark this, if the expeditionary force, and I ask for no more than two hundred men, does not come in ten days *the town may fall*; and I have done my best for the honour of our country. Good bye."

Owing to lack of transport, and other difficulties, the vanguard of the relieving force could not begin its march from the new Nile base, near Korti, until December 30th. Thence the gallant Sir Herbert Stewart led a picked column of men with eighteen hundred camels across the desert towards Metammeh. Lord Wolseley remained behind to guard the new base of operations. At Abu Klea

wells, when nearing the Nile, the column was assailed by a great mass of Arabs. They advanced in five columns, each having a wedge-shaped head designed to pierce the British square. With a low murmuring cry or chant they rushed on in admirable order, disregarding the heavy losses caused by the steady fire of three faces of the square. Their leaders soon saw the weak place in the defence, namely, at one of the rear corners, where belated skirmishers were still running in for shelter, where also one of the guns jammed at the critical moment. One of their Emirs, calmly reciting his prayers, rode in through the gap thus formed, and for ten minutes bayonet and spear plied their deadly thrusts at close quarters. Thanks to the firmness of the British infantry, every Arab that forced his way in perished; but in this *mêlée* there perished a stalwart soldier whom England could ill spare, Colonel Burnaby, hero of the ride to Khiva. Lord Charles Beresford, of the Naval Brigade, had a narrow escape while striving to set right the defective cannon. In all Stewart lost sixty-five killed and sixty wounded, a proportion which tells its own tale as to the fighting.<sup>1</sup>

Two days later, while the force was beating off an attack of the Arabs near Metammeh, General Stewart received a wound which proved to be mortal. The command now devolved on Sir Charles Wilson, of the Royal Engineers. After repelling the attacks of other Mahdists and making good his position on the Nile, the new commander came into touch with Gordon's steamers, which arrived there on the 21st, with 190 Sudanese. Again, however, the advance

<sup>1</sup> Sir C. W. Wilson, *From Korti to Khartum*, pp. 28-35; also see Hon. R. Talbot's article on "Abu Klea," in the *Nineteenth Century* for January, 1886.

of other Arabs from Omdurman caused a delay until a fortified camp, or zariba, could be formed. Wilson now had but 1322 unwounded men; and he saw that the Mahdists were in far greater force than Lord Wolseley or General Gordon had expected. Not until January 24th could the commander steam away southwards with twenty men of the Sussex regiment and the 190 Sudanese soldiers on the two largest of Gordon's boats—his "penny steamers" as he whimsically termed them.

The sequel is well known. After overcoming many difficulties caused by rocks and sandbanks, after running the gauntlet of the Mahdist fire, this forlorn hope neared Khartum on the 28th, only to find that the place had fallen. There was nothing for it but to put about and escape while it was possible. Sir Charles Wilson has described the scene: "The masses of the enemy with their fluttering banners near Khartum, the long rows of riflemen in the shelter-trenches at Omdurman, the numerous groups of men on Tuti [Island], the bursting of shells, and the water torn up by hundreds of bullets, and occasionally heavier shot, made an impression never to be forgotten. Looking out over the stormy scene, it seemed almost impossible that we should escape."<sup>1</sup>

Weighed down by grief at the sad failure of all their strivings, the little band yet succeeded in escaping to Metammeh. They afterwards found out that they were two days too late. The final cause of the fall of Khartum is not fully known. The notion first current, that it was due to treachery, has been discredited. Certainly the defenders were weakened by privation and cowed by the Mahdist successes. The final attack was also given at a weak

<sup>1</sup> Sir C. W. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-177.

place in the long line of defence; but whether the defenders all did their best, or were anxious to make terms with the Mahdi, will probably never be known. The conduct of the assailants in at once firing on the relieving force forbids the notion that they all along intended to get into Khartum by treachery just before the approach of the steamers. Had that been their aim, they would surely have added one crowning touch of guile, that of remaining quiet until Wilson and his men landed at Khartum. The capture of the town would therefore seem to be due to force, not to treachery.

All these speculations are dwarfed by the overwhelming fact that Gordon perished. Various versions have been given of the manner of his death. One that rests on good authority is that he died fighting. Another account, which seems more consistent with his character, is that, on hearing of the enemy's rush into the town, he calmly remarked: "It is all finished; to-day Gordon will be killed." In a short time a chief of the Baggara Arabs with a few others burst in and ordered him to come to the Mahdi. Gordon refused. Thrice the Sheikh repeated the command. Thrice Gordon calmly repeated his refusal. The Sheikh then drew his sword and slashed at his shoulder. Gordon still looked him steadily in the face. Thereupon the miscreant struck at his neck, cut off his head, and carried it to the Mahdi.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever may be the truth as to details, it is certain that no man ever looked death in the face so long and so serenely as Gordon. For him life was but duty—duty to

<sup>1</sup> A third account, given by Bordeini Bey, a merchant of Khartum, differs in many details. It is printed by Sir F. R. Wingate in his *Mahdism*, p. 171.

God and duty to man. We may fitly apply to him the noble lines which Tennyson offered to the memory of another steadfast soul:

He that, ever following her commands,  
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,  
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won  
His path upward, and prevail'd,  
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled  
Are close upon the shining table-lands  
To which our God Himself is moon and sun.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONQUEST OF THE SUDAN

"The Sudan, if once proper communication was established, would not be difficult to govern. The only mode of improving the access to the Sudan, seeing the impoverished state of Egyptian finances, and the mode to do so without an outlay of more than £10,000, is by the Nile."—*Gordon's Journals* (Sept. 19, 1884).

IT may seem that an account of the fall of Khartum is out of place in a volume which deals only with formative events. But this is not so. The example of Gordon's heroism was of itself a great incentive to action for the cause of settled government in that land. For that cause he had given his life, and few Britons were altogether deaf to the mute appeal of that lonely struggle. Then, again, the immense increase to the Mahdi's power resulting from the capture of the arsenal of Khartum constituted (as Gordon had prophesied) a serious danger to Egypt. The continued presence of British troops at Wady Halfa, and that alone, saved the valley of the lower Nile from a desolating flood of savagery. This was a fact recognised by every one at Cairo, even by the ultra-Gallic party. Egypt alone has rarely been able to hold at bay any great downward movement of the tribes of Ethiopia and Nubia; and the danger was never so great as in and after 1885. The Mahdi's proclamations to the faithful now swelled with inconceivable pride. To a wavering sheikh he sent

the warning: "If you live long enough you will see the troops of the Mahdi spreading over Europe, Rome, and Constantinople, after which there will be nothing left for you but hell and damnation." The mistiness of the geography was hidden by the vigour of the theology, and all the sceptics of Nubia hastened to accept the new prophet.

But his time of tyranny soon drew to a close. A woman of Khartum, who had been outraged by him or his followers, determined to wreak her vengeance. On June 14, 1885, she succeeded in giving him slow poison, which led him to his death amidst long-drawn agonies eight days later. This ought to have been the death of Mahdism as well, but superstitions die hard in that land of fanatics. The Mahdi's factotum, an able intriguer named Abdullah Taashi had previously gained from his master a written declaration that he was to be Khalifa after him; he now produced this document, and fortified its influence by describing in great detail a vision in which the ghost of the Mahdi handed him a sacred hair of inestimable worth, and an oblong-shaped light which had come direct from the hands of the true Prophet, who had received it from the hands of the angel Gabriel, to whom it had been entrusted by the Almighty.

This silly story was eagerly believed by the many, the questioning few also finding it well to still their doubts in presence of death or torture. Piety and politics quickly worked hand in hand to found the impostor's authority. A mosque began to rise over the tomb of the Mahdi in his chosen capital, Omdurman, and his successor gained the support and the offerings of the thousands of pilgrims who came to visit that wonder-working shrine. Such was the

basis of the new rule, which spread over the valley of the Upper and Middle Nile, and carried terror nearly to the borders of Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

There law and order slowly took root under the shadow of the British administration, but Egypt ceased to control the lands south of Wady Halfa. Mr. Gladstone announced that decision in the House of Commons on May 11, 1885; and those who discover traces of the perfidy of Albion, even in the vacillations of her policy, maintain that that declaration was made with a view to an eventual annexation of the Sudan by England. Their contention would be still more forcible if they would prove that the Gladstone Ministry deliberately sacrificed Gordon at Khartum in order to increase the Mahdi's power and leave Egypt open to his blows, thereby gaining one more excuse for delaying the long-promised evacuation of the Nile delta by the red-coats. This was the *outcome* of events; and those who argue backwards should have the courage of their convictions and throw all the facts of the case into their syllogisms.

All who have any knowledge of the trend of British statesmanship in the eighties know perfectly well that the occupation of Egypt was looked on as a serious incubus. The Salisbury Cabinet sought to give effect to the promises of evacuation, and with that aim in view sent Sir Henry Drummond Wolff to Constantinople in the year 1887 for the settlement of details. The year 1890 was ultimately fixed, provided that no danger should accrue to Egypt from such action, and that Great Britain should "retain a treaty-right of intervening if at any time either the internal peace or external security [of Egypt] should be seriously

<sup>1</sup> Wingate, *Mahdism*, pp. 228-233.

threatened." To this last stipulation the Sultan seemed prepared to agree. Austria, Germany, and Italy notified their complete agreement with it; but France and Russia refused to accept the British offer with this proviso added and even influenced the Sultan so that he, too, finally opposed it. Their unfriendly action can only be attributed to a desire of humiliating Great Britain, and of depriving her of any effective influence in the land which, at such loss of blood and treasure to herself, she had saved from anarchy. Their opposition wrecked the proposal, and the whole position therefore remained unchanged. British officials continued to administer Egypt in spite of opposition from the French in all possible details connected with the vital question of finance.<sup>1</sup>

Other incidents that occurred during the years intervening between the fall of Gordon and the despatch of Sir Herbert Kitchener's expedition need not detain us here.<sup>2</sup> The causes which led to this new departure will be more fitly considered when we come to notice the Fashoda incident; but we may here remark that they probably arose out of the French and Belgian schemes for the partition of Central Africa. A desire to rescue the Sudan from a cruel and degrading tyranny and to offer a tardy reparation to the memory of Gordon doubtless had some weight with Ministers, as it undoubtedly had with the public. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the *vox populi* would have allowed the expedition but for these more sentimental considerations. But, in the view of the present writer, the Sudan expedition presents the best

<sup>1</sup> *England in Egypt*, by Sir Alfred Milner, pp. 145-153.

<sup>2</sup> For the Sudan in this period see Wingate's *Mahdism*; Slatin's *Fire and Sword in the Sudan*, C. Neufeld's *A Prisoner of the Khalifá*.

instance of foresight, resolve, and able execution that is to be found in the recent annals of Britain.

With the hour had come the man. During the dreary years of the "mark-time" policy Colonel Kitchener had gained renown as a determined fighter and able organiser. For some time he acted as governor of Suakim, and showed his powers of command by gaining over some of the neighbouring tribes and planning an attack on Osman Digna which came very near to success. Under him and many other British officers the Egyptians and Sudanese gradually learned confidence, and broke the spell of invincibility that so long had rested with the Dervish hordes. On all sides the power of the Khalifa was manifestly waning. The powerful Hadendowa tribe, near Suakim, which had given so much trouble in 1883-84, became neutral. On the Nile also the Dervishes lost ground. The Anglo-Egyptian troops wrested from them the post of Sarras, some thirty miles south of Wady Halfa; and the efforts of the fanatics to capture the wells along desert routes far to the east of the river were bloodily repulsed. As long as Sarras, Wady Halfa, and those wells were firmly held, Egypt was safe.

At Gedaref, not very far from Omdurman, the Khalifa sustained a severe check from the Italians (December, 1893), who thereupon occupied the town of Kassala. It was not to be for any length of time. In all their enterprises against the warlike Abyssinians they completely failed; and, after sustaining the disastrous defeat of Adowa (March 1, 1896), the whole nation despaired of reaping any benefit from the *Hinterland* of their colony around Massowah. The new Cabinet at Rome resolved to withdraw from the districts around Kassala. On this news being communicated to the British Ministers, they

sent a request to Rome that the evacuation of Kassala might be delayed until Anglo-Egyptian troops could be despatched to occupy that important station. In this way the intended withdrawal of the Italians served to strengthen the resolve of the British Government to help the Khedive in effecting the recovery of the Sudan.<sup>1</sup>

Preparations for the advance southwards went forward slowly and methodically through the summer and autumn of 1896. For the present the operations were limited to the recapture of Dongola. Sir Herbert Kitchener, then the Sirdar of the Egyptian army, was placed in command. Under him were men who had proved their worth in years of desultory fighting against the Khalifa — Broadwood, Hunter, Lewis, Macdonald, Maxwell, and many others. The training had been so long and severe as to weed out all weaklings; and the Sirdar himself was the very incarnation of that stern but salutary law of nature which ordains the survival of the fittest. Scores of officers who failed to come up to his requirements were quietly removed; and the result was seen in a finely seasoned body of men, apt at all tasks, from staff duties to railway control. A comparison of the Egyptian army that fought at Omdurman with that which thirteen years before ran away screaming from a tenth of its number of Dervishes affords the most impressive lesson of modern times of the triumph of mind over matter, of western fortitude over the weaker side of eastern fatalism.

Such a building up of character as this implies could not

<sup>1</sup> See articles by Dr. E. J. Dillon and by Jules Simon in the *Contemporary Review* for April and May, 1896. Kassala was handed over to an Egyptian force under Colonel Parsons in December, *The Egyptian Sudan*, by H. S. L. Alford and W. D. Sword (1898).

take place in a month or two, for the mind of Egyptians and Sudanese was at first an utter blank as to the need of prompt obedience and still prompter action. An amusing case of their incredible slackness has been recorded. On the first parade of a new camel transport corps before Lord Kitchener, the leading driver stopped his animal, and therefore all that followed, immediately in front of the Sirdar, in order to light a cigarette. It is needless to say the cigarette was not lighted, but the would-be smoker had his first lesson as to the superiority of the claims of collectivism over the whims of the individual.<sup>1</sup>

As will be seen by reference to the map on page 192, the decision to limit the campaign to Dongola involved the choice of the Nile route. If the blow had been aimed straight at Khartum, the Suakim-Berber route, or even that by way of Kassala, would have had many advantages. Above all, the river route held out the prospect of effective help from gunboats in the final attacks on Berber, Omdurman, and Khartum. Seeing, however, that the greater part of the river's course between Sarras and Dongola was broken up by rapids, the railway and the camel had at first to perform nearly the whole of the transport duties for which the Nile was there unsuited. The work of repairing the railway from Wady Halfa to Sarras, and thenceforth of constructing it through rocky wastes, amidst constant risk of Dervish raids, called into play every faculty of ingenuity, patience, and hardihood. But little by little the line crept on; the locomotives carried the piles of food, stores, and ammunition further and further south, until on June 6, 1897, the first blow was dealt by the surprise and destruction of the Dervish force at Ferket.

<sup>1</sup> *Sudan Campaign, 1896-97*, by "An Officer," p. 20.

There a halt was called; for news came in that an unprecedented rain storm further north had washed away the railway embankments from some of the gulleys. To make good the damage would take thirty days, it was said. The Sirdar declared that the line must be ready in twelve days; he went back to push on the work; in twelve days the line was ready. As an example of the varied difficulties that were met and overcome, we may mention one. The work of putting together a steamer, which had been brought up in sections, was stopped because an all-important nut had been lost in transit. At once the Sirdar ordered horsemen to patrol the railway line—and the nut was found. At last the vessel was ready; but on her trial trip she burst a cylinder and had to be left behind.<sup>1</sup> Three small steamers and four gunboats were, however, available for service in the middle of September, when the expedition moved on.

By this time the effective force numbered about 12,000 men. The Dervishes had little heart for fighting to the north of Dongola; and even at that town, they made but a poor stand, cowed as they were by the shells of the steamers and perplexed by the enveloping moves which the Sirdar ordered; seven hundred were taken in Dongola, and the best three hundred of these were incorporated in the Sirdar's Sudanese regiments (September 23, 1896).

Thus ended the first part of the expedition. Events had justified Gordon's statement that a small well-equipped expedition could speedily overthrow the Mahdi—that is, in the days of his comparative weakness before the capture of Khartum. The ease with which Dongola had been

<sup>1</sup> *Sudan Campaign*, p. 54.



taken and the comparative cheapness of the expedition predisposed the Egyptian Government and the English public to view its extension southwards with less of disfavour.

Again the new stride forward had to be prepared for by careful preparations at the base. The question of route also caused delay. It proved to be desirable to begin a new railway from Wady Halfa across the desert to Abu Hamed, at the northern tip of the deep bend which the Nile makes below Berber. To drive a line into a desert in order to attack an enemy holding a good position beyond seemed a piece of foolhardiness. Nevertheless it was done, and at the average rate of about one and a quarter miles a day. In due course General Hunter pushed on and captured Abu Hamed, the inhabitants of which showed little fight, being thoroughly weary of Dervish tyranny (August 6, 1897).

The arrival of gunboats after a long struggle with the rapids below Abu Hamed gave Hunter's little force a much-needed support; and before he could advance further, news reached him that the Dervishes had abandoned Berber. This step caused general surprise, and it has never been fully explained. Some have averred that a panic seized the wives of the Dervish garrison at Berber, and that when they rushed out of the town southwards their husbands followed them.<sup>1</sup> Certain it is that family feelings, which the Dervishes so readily outraged in others, played a leading part in many of their movements. Whatever the cause may have been, the abandonment of Berber greatly facilitated the work of Sir Herbert Kitchener. A strong force soon mustered at that town, and the route to

<sup>1</sup> *The Downfall of the Dervishes*, by E. N. Bennett, M.A., p. 23.

the Red Sea was reopened by a friendly arrangement with the local sheikhs.

The next important barrier to the advance was the river Atbara. Here the Dervishes had a force some eighteen thousand strong; but before long the Sirdar received timely reinforcements of a British brigade, consisting of the Cameron and Seaforth Highlanders and the Lincolnshire and Warwickshire regiments, under General Gatacre. Various considerations led the Sirdar to wait until he could strike a telling blow. What was most to be dreaded was the adoption of Parthian tactics by the enemy. Fortunately they had constructed a zariba (a camp surrounded by thorn-bushes) on the north bank of the Atbara at a point twenty miles above its confluence with the Nile. At last, on April 7, 1898, after trying to tempt the enemy to a battle in the open, the Sirdar moved forward his 14,000 men in the hope of rushing the position soon after dawn of the following day, Good Friday.

Before the first streaks of sunrise tinged the east, the assailants moved forward to a ridge overlooking the Dervish position; but very few heads were seen above the thorny rampart in the hollow opposite. It was judged to be too risky at once to charge a superior force that clung to so strong a shelter, and for an hour and a half the British and Egyptian guns plied the zariba in the hope of bringing the fanatics out to fight. Still they kept quiet; and their fortitude during this time of carnage bore witness to their bravery and discipline.<sup>1</sup>

At 7.45 the Sirdar ordered the advance. The British brigade held the left wing, the Camerons leading in line

<sup>1</sup> *The Egyptian Sudan: its Loss and Recovery*, by H. S. L. Alford and W. D. Sword, ch. iv.

formation, while behind them in columns were ranged the Warwicks, Seaforths, and Lincolns, to add weight to the onset. Macdonald's and Maxwell's Egyptian and Sudanese brigades, drawn up in lines, formed the centre and right. Squadrons of Egyptian horse and a battery of Maxims confronted the Dervish horsemen ranged along the front of a dense scrub to the left of the zariba. As the converging lines advanced, they were met by a terrific discharge; fortunately it was aimed too high, or the loss would have been fearful. Then the Highlanders and Sudanese rushed in, tore apart the thorn bushes, and began a fierce fight at close quarters. From their shelter trenches, pits, and huts the Dervishes poured in spasmodic volleys, or rushed at their assailants with spear or bayonet. Even at this the fanatics of the desert were no match for the seasoned troops of the Sirdar; and soon the beaten remnant streamed out through the scrub or over the dry bed of the Atbara. About 2500 were killed, and 2000, including Mahmud, the commander, were taken prisoners. Those who attempted to reach the fertile country round Kassala were there hunted down or captured by the Egyptian garrison that lately had arrived there.

As on previous occasions, the Sirdar now waited some time until the railway could be brought up to the points lately conquered. More gunboats were also constructed for the final stage of the expedition. The dash at Omdurman and Khartum promised to tax to the uttermost the strength of the army; but another brigade of British troops, commanded by Colonel Lyttelton, soon joined the expedition, bringing its effective strength up to 23,000 men. General Gatacre received the command of the British division. Ten gunboats, five transport steamers,

and eight barges promised to secure complete command of the river banks and to provide means for transporting the army and all needful stores to the western bank of the Nile wherever the Sirdar judged it to be advisable. The mid-summer rains in the equatorial districts now made their influence felt, and in the middle of August the Nile covered the sandbanks and rocks that made navigation dangerous at the time of "low Nile." In the last week of that month all was ready for the long and carefully prepared advance. The infantry travelled in steamers or barges as far as the foot of the Shabluka, or Sixth Cataract, and this method of advance left the Dervishes in some doubt by which bank the final advance would be made.

By an unexpected piece of good fortune the Dervishes had evacuated the rocky heights of the Shabluka gorge. This was matter for rejoicing. There the Nile, which above and below is a mile wide, narrows to a channel of little more than a hundred yards in width. It is the natural defence of Khartum on the north. The strategy of the Khalifa was here again inexplicable, as also was his abandonment of the ridge at Kerreri, some seven miles north of Omdurman. Mr. Bennett Burleigh in his account of the campaign states that the Khalifa had repaired thither once a year to give thanks for the triumph about to be gained there.

At last, on September 1st, on topping the Kerreri ridge, the invaders caught their first glimpse of Omdurman. Already the gunboats were steaming up to the Mahdist capital to throw in their first shells. They speedily dismounted several guns, and one of the shells tore away a large portion of the gaudy cupola that covered the Mahdi's tomb. Apart from this portent, nothing of moment was

done on that day; but it seems probable that the bombardment led the Khalifa to hazard an attack on the invaders in the desert on the side away from the Nile. Nearer to the Sirdar's main force the skirmishing of the 21st Lancers, new to war but eager to "win their spurs," was answered by angry but impotent charges of the Khalifa's horse and foot, until at sunset both sides retired for the night's rest.

The Anglo-Egyptian force made a zariba around the village of el-Gennuaia on the river bank; and there, in full expectation of a night attack, they sought what slumber was to be had. What with a panic rush of Sudanese servants and the stampede of an angry camel, the night wore away uneasily; but there was no charge of Dervishes such as might have carried death to the heart of that small zariba. It is said that the Sirdar had passed the hint to some trusty spies to pretend to be deserters and warn the enemy that *he* was going to attack them by night. If this be so, spies have never done better service.

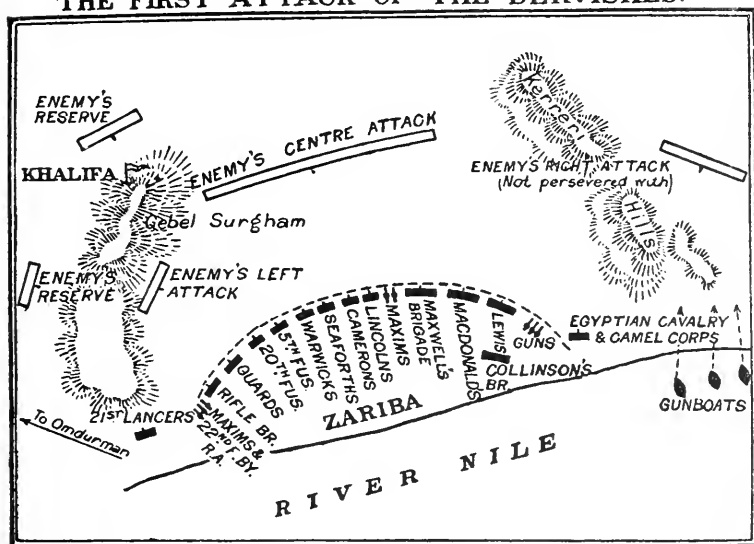
When the first glimmer of dawn came on September 2nd, every man felt instinctively that the Khalifa had thrown away his last chance. Yet few were prepared for the crowning act of madness. Every one feared that he would hold fast to Omdurman and fight the new crusaders from house to house. Possibly the seeming weakness of the zariba tempted him to a concentric attack from the Kerreri Hills and the ridge which stretches on both sides of the steep slopes of the hill Gebel Surgham. A glance at the plan on page 213 will show that the position was such as to tempt a confident enemy. The Sirdar also manœuvred so as to bring on an attack. He sent out the Egyptian cavalry and camel corps soon after dawn to the

plain lying between Gebel Surgham and Omdurman to lure on the Khalifa's men.

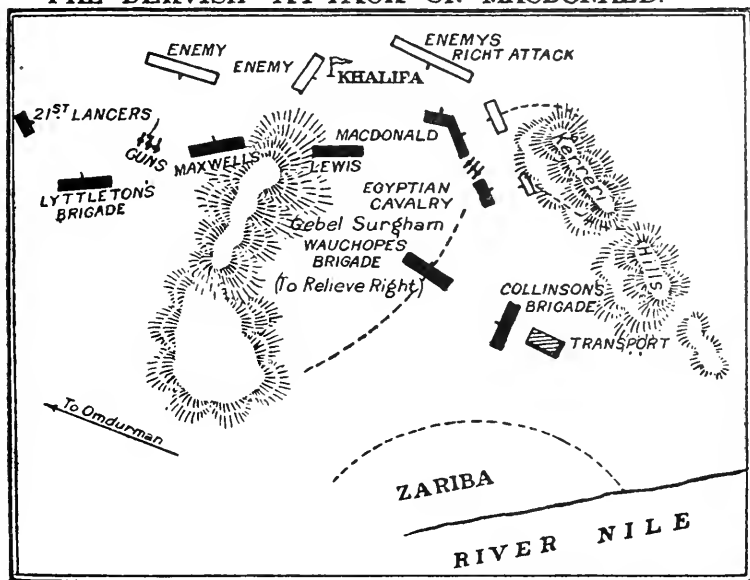
The device was completely successful. Believing that they could catch the horsemen in the rocky ridge alongside of Gebel Surgham, the Dervishes came forth from their capital in swarms, pressed them hard, and inflicted some losses. Retiring in good order, the cavalry drew on the eager hordes, until about 6.30 A.M. the white glint of their *gibbeks*, or tunics, showed thickly above the tawny slopes on either side of Gebel Surgham. On they came in unnumbered throngs, until, pressing northwards along the sky-line, their lines also topped the Kerreri Hills to the north of the zariba. Their aim was obvious: they intended to surround the invaders, pen them up in their zariba, and slaughter them there. To all who did not know the value of the central position in war and the power of modern weapons, the attack seemed to promise complete success. The invaders were 1300 miles away from Cairo and defeat would mean destruction.

Religious zeal lent strength to the onset. From the converging crescent of the Mahdists a sound as of a dim murmur was wafted to the zariba. Little by little it deepened to a hoarse roar, as the host surged on, chanting the pious invocations that so often had struck terror into the Egyptians. Now they heard the threatening din with hearts unmoved; nay, with spirits longing for revenge for untold wrongs and insults. Thus for some minutes in that vast amphitheatre the discipline and calm confidence of the West stood quietly facing the fanatic fury of the East. Two worlds were there embattled: the world of Mohammedanism and the world of Christian civilisation; the empire of untutored force and the empire of mind.

# THE FIRST ATTACK OF THE DERVISHES.



# THE DERVISH ATTACK ON MACDONALD.



Stanfords Geogt. Estab<sup>t</sup>, London.

BATTLE OF OMDURMAN

At last, after some minutes of tense expectancy, the cannon opened fire, and speedily gaps were seen in the white masses. Yet the crescent never slackened its advance, except when groups halted to fire their muskets at impossible ranges. Waving their flags and intoning their prayers, the Dervishes charged on in utter scorn of death; but when their ranks came within range of the musketry fire, they went down like swathes of grass under the scythe. Then was seen a marvellous sight. When the dead were falling their fastest, a band of about 150 Dervish horsemen formed near the Khalifa's dark-green standard in the centre and rushed across the fire zone, determined to snatch at triumph or gain the sensuous joys of the Moslem paradise. None of them rode far.

Only on the north, where the camel corps fell into an awkward plight among the rocks of the Kerreri slope, had the attack any chance of success; and there the shells of one of the six protecting gunboats helped to check the assailants. On this side, too, Colonel Broadwood and his Egyptian cavalry did excellent service by leading no small part of the Dervish left away from the attack on the zariba. At the middle of the fiery crescent the assailants did some execution by firing from a dip in the ground some four hundred yards away; but their attempts to rush the intervening space all ended in mere slaughter. Not long after eight o'clock the Khalifa, seeing the hopelessness of attempting to cross the zone of fire around el-Gennuaia, now thickly strewn with his dead, drew off the survivors beyond the ridge of Gebel Surgham; and those who had followed Broadwood's horse also gave up their futile pursuit, and began to muster on the Kerreri ridge.



The Sirdar now sought to force on a fight in the open; and with this aim in view commanded a general advance on Omdurman. In order, as it would seem, to keep a fighting formation that would impose respect on the bands of Dervishes on the Kerreri Hills, he adopted the formation known as echelon of brigades from the left. Macdonald's Sudanese brigade, which held the northern face of the zariba, was therefore compelled to swing round and march diagonally towards Gebel Surgham; and, having a longer space to cover than the other brigades, it soon fell behind them.

For the present, however, the brunt of the danger fell, not on Macdonald, but on the vanguard. The 21st Lancers had been sent forward over the ridge between Gebel Surgham and the Nile with orders to reconnoitre, and, if possible, to head the Dervishes away from their city. Throwing out scouts, they rode over the ridge, but soon afterwards came upon a steep and therefore concealed khor or gulley whence a large body of concealed Dervishes poured a sharp fire.<sup>1</sup> At once Colonel Martin ordered his men to dash at the enemy. Eagerly the troopers obeyed the order and jumped their horses down the slope into the mass of furious fanatics below; these slashed to pieces every one that fell, and viciously sought to hamstring the horses from behind. Pushing through the mass, the lancers scrambled up the further bank, re-formed, and rushed at the groups beyond; after thrusting these aside, they betook themselves to less dramatic but more effective methods. Dismounting, they opened a rapid and very effective fire from their carbines on the throngs that still

<sup>1</sup> Some accounts state that the Lancers had no scouts, but "An Officer" denies this (*Sudan Campaign*, 1896-99, p. 198).

clustered in or near the gully. The charge, though a fine display of British pluck, cost the horsemen dear: out of a total of 320 men 60 were killed and wounded; 119 horses were killed or made useless.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, Macdonald's brigade, consisting of one Egyptian and three Sudanese battalions, stood on the brink of disaster. The bands from the Kerreri Hills were secretly preparing to charge its rear, while masses of the Khalifa's main following turned back, rounded the western spurs of Gebel Surgham, and threatened to envelop its right flank. The Sirdar, on seeing the danger, ordered Wauchope's brigade to turn back to the help of Macdonald, while Maxwell's Sudanese, swarming up the eastern slopes of Gebel Surgham, poured deadly volleys on the Khalifa's following. Collinson's division and the camel corps were ordered to advance from the neighbourhood of the zariba and support Macdonald on that side. Before these dispositions were complete, that sturdy Scotsman and his Sudanese felt the full weight of the Khalifa's onset. Excited beyond measure, Macdonald's men broke into spasmodic firing as the enemy came on; the deployment into line was thereby disordered, and it needed all Macdonald's power of command to make good the line. His steadiness stiffened the defence, and before the potent charm of Western discipline the Khalifa's onset died away.

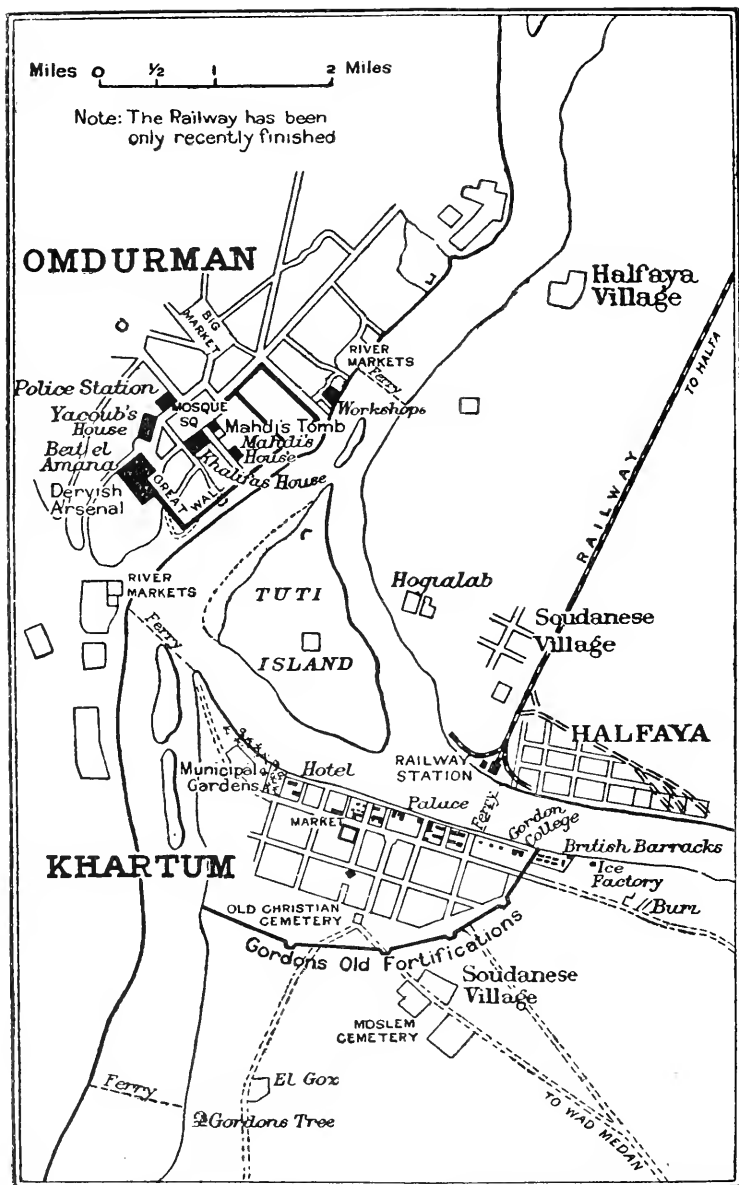
But now the storm cloud gathering in the rear burst with unexpected fury. Masses of men led by the Khalifa's son, the Sheikh ed Din, rushed down the Kerreri slopes and threatened to overwhelm the brigade. Again there was

<sup>1</sup> The general opinion of the army was that the charge of the Lancers "was magnificent, but was not war." See G. W. Steevens's *With Kitchener to Khartum*, ch. xxxii.

seen a proof of the ascendancy of mind over brute force. At once Macdonald ordered the left part of his line to wheel round, keeping the right as pivot, so that the whole speedily formed two fronts resembling a capital letter V, pointing outwards to the two hostile forces. Those who saw the movement wondered alike at the masterly resolve, the steadiness of execution, and the fanatical bravery which threatened to make it all of no avail. On came the white swarms of Arabs from the north, until the Sudanese firing once more became wild and ineffective; but, as the ammunition of the blacks ran low and they prepared to trust to the bayonet, the nearest unit of the British division, the Lincolns, doubled up, prolonged Macdonald's line to the right, and poured volley upon volley obliquely into the surging flood. It slackened, stood still, and then slowly ebbed. Macdonald's coolness and the timely arrival of the Lincolns undoubtedly averted a serious disaster.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the Khalifa's main force had been held in check and decimated by the artillery now planted on Gebel Surgham and by the fire of the brigades on or near its slopes; so that about eleven o'clock the Sirdar's lines could everywhere advance. After beating off a desperate charge of Baggara horsemen from the west, Macdonald unbent his brigade and drove back the sullen hordes of ed Din to the western spurs of the Kerreri Hills, where they were harassed by Broadwood's horse. All was now ended, except at the centre of the Khalifa's force, where a faithful band clustered about the dark-green standard of their leader and chanted defiance to the infidels till one by

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Winston Churchill's *The River War*, ii., pp. 160-163, for the help given by the Lincolns.



PLAN OF KHARTUM

one they fell. The chief himself, unworthy object of this devotion, fled away on a swift dromedary some time before the last group of stalwarts bit the sand.

Despite the terrible heat and the thirst of his men, the Sirdar allowed only a brief rest before he resumed the march on Omdurman. Leaving no time for the bulk of the Dervish survivors to reach their capital, he pushed on at the head of Maxwell's brigade, while once more the shells of the gunboats spread terror in the city. The news brought by a few runaways and the sight of the Khalifa's standard carried behind the Egyptian ensign dispelled all hopes of resisting the disciplined Sudanese battalions; and, in order to clinch matters, the Sirdar with splendid courage rode at the head of the brigade to summon the city to surrender. Through the clusters of hovels on the outskirts he rode on despite the protests of his staff against any needless exposure of his life. He rightly counted on the effect which such boldness on the part of the chief must have on an undecided populace. Fanatics here and there fired on the conquerors, but the news of the Khalifa's cowardly flight from the city soon decided the wavering mass to bow before the inscrutable decrees of Fate, and ask for backsheesh from the victors.

Thus was Omdurman taken. Neufeld, an Austrian trader, and some Greeks and nuns who had been in captivity for several years, were at once set free. It was afterwards estimated that about ten thousand Dervishes perished in the battle; very many died of their wounds upon the field or were bayoneted owing to their persistence in firing on the victors. This episode formed the darkest side of the triumph; but it was malignantly magnified by some Continental journals into a wholesale slaughter. This is

false. Omdurman will bear comparison with Skobelev's victory at Denghil Tepé at all points.

Two days after his triumph the Sirdar ordered a parade opposite the ruins of the palace in Khartum where Gordon had met his doom. The funeral service held there in memory of the dead hero was, perhaps, the most affecting scene that this generation has witnessed. Detachments of most of the regiments of the rescue force formed a semi-circle round the Sirdar; and by his side stood a group of war-worn officers, who with him had toiled for years in order to see this day. The funeral service was intoned; the solemn assembly sang Gordon's favourite hymn, *Abide with Me*, and the Scottish pipes wailed their lament for the lost chieftain. Few eyes were undimmed by tears at the close of this service, a slight but affecting reparation for the delays and blunders of fourteen years before. Then the Union Jack and the Egyptian Crescent flag were hoisted and received a salute of twenty-one guns.

The recovery of the Sudan by Egypt and Great Britain was not to pass unchallenged. All along France had viewed the reconquest of the valley of the upper Nile with ill-concealed jealousy, and some persons have maintained that the French Government was not a stranger to designs hatched in France for helping the Khalifa.<sup>1</sup> Now that these questions have been happily buried by the Anglo-French agreement of the year 1904, it would be foolish to recount all that was said amidst the excitements of the year 1898. Some reference must, however, be made to the Fashoda incident, which for a short space threatened to bring Great Britain and France to an open rupture.

<sup>1</sup> See an unsigned article in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1897.

On September 5th, a steamer, flying the white flag, reached Omdurman. The ex-Dervish captain brought the news that at Fashoda he had been fired upon by white men bearing a strange flag. The Sirdar divined the truth, namely, that a French expedition under Major (now Colonel) Marchand must have made its way from the Congo to the White Nile at Fashoda with the aim of annexing that district for France.

Now that the dust of controversy has cleared away, we can see facts in their true proportions, especially as the work recently published by M. de Freycinet and the revelations of Colonel Marchand have thrown more light on the affair. Briefly stated, the French case is as follows. Mr. Gladstone on May 11, 1885, declared officially that Egypt limited her sway to a line drawn through Wady Halfa. The authority of the Khedive over the Sudan therefore ceased, though this did not imply the cessation of the Sultan's suzerainty in those regions. Further, England had acted as if the Sudan were no man's land by appropriating the southernmost part in accordance with the Anglo-German agreement of July 1, 1890; and Uganda became a British Protectorate in August, 1894. The French protested against this extension of British influence over the upper Nile; and we must admit that, in regard to international law, they were right. The power to will away that district lay with the Sultan, the Khedive's claims having practically lapsed. Germany, it is true agreed not to contest the annexation of Uganda, but France did contest it.

The Republic also entered a protest against the Anglo-Congolese Convention of May 12, 1894, whereby, in return for the acquisition of the right bank of the upper Nile,

England ceded to the Congo Free State the left bank.<sup>1</sup> That compact was accordingly withdrawn, and on August 14, 1894, France secured from the Free State the recognition of her claims to the left bank of the Nile with the exception of the Lado district below the Albert Nyanza. This action on the part of France implied a desire on her part to appropriate these lands, and to contest the British claim to the right bank. In regard to law, she was justified in so doing: and had she, acting as the mandatory of the Sultan, sent an expedition from the Congo to the upper Nile, her conduct in proclaiming a Turco-Frankish condominium would have been unexceptionable. That of Britain was open to question, seeing that the English practically ignored the Sultan<sup>2</sup> and acted (so far as is known) on their own initiative in reversing the policy of abandonment officially announced in May, 1885. From the standpoint of equity, however, the Khedive had the first claim to the territories then given up under stress of circumstances; and the Power that helped him to regain the heritage of his sires obviously had a strong claim to consideration so long as it acted with the full consent of that potentate.

The British Cabinet, that of Lord Rosebery, frankly proclaimed its determination to champion the claims of the Khedive against all comers, Sir Edward Grey declaring officially in the debate of March 28, 1895, that the despatch of a French expedition to the upper Nile would be "an unfriendly act."<sup>3</sup> It is known now, through the revelations made by Colonel Marchand in the *Matin* of June 20, 1905, that in June, 1895, he had pressed the French Government

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Egypt, No. 2 (1898), pp. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> The Earl of Kimberley's reply of August 14, 1894, to M. Hanotaux, is very weak on this topic. Parl. Papers, Egypt, No. 2 (1898), pp. 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.



to intervene in that quarter; but it did little, relying (so M. de Freycinet states) on the compact of August 14, 1894, and not, apparently, on any mandate from the Sultan. If so, it had less right to intervene than the British Government had in virtue of its close connection with the Khedive. As a matter of fact, both Powers lacked an authoritative mandate and acted in accordance with their own interests. It is therefore futile to appeal to law, as M. de Freycinet has done.

It remained to see which of the two would act the more efficiently. M. Marchand states that his plan of action was approved by the French Minister for the Colonies, M. Berthelot, on November 16, 1895; but little came of it until the news of the preparations for the Anglo-Egyptian expedition reached Paris. It would be interesting to hear what Lord Rosebery and Sir Edward Grey would say to this. For the present we may affirm with some confidence that the tidings of the Franco-Congolese compact of August, 1894, and of expeditions sent under Monteil and Liotard towards the Nile basin must have furnished the real motive for the despatch of the Sirdar's army on the expedition to Dongola. That event in its turn aroused angry feelings at Paris, and M. Berthelot went so far as to inform Lord Salisbury that he would not hold himself responsible for events that might occur if the expedition up the Nile were persisted in. After giving this brusque but useful warning of the importance which France attached to the upper Nile, M. Berthelot quitted office, and M. Bourgeois, the Prime Minister, took the portfolio for foreign affairs. He pushed on the Marchand expedition; so also did his successor, M. Hanotaux, in the Méline Cabinet which speedily supervened.

Marchand left Marseilles on June 25, 1896, to join his expeditionary force, then being prepared in the French Congo. It is needless to detail the struggles of the gallant band. After battling for two years with the rapids, swamps, forests, and mountains of Eastern Congoland and the Bahr-el-Ghazal, he brought his flotilla down to the White Nile, thence up its course to Fashoda, where he hoisted the tricolour (July 12, 1898). His men strengthened the old Egyptian fort, and beat off an attack of the Dervishes.

Nevertheless they had only half succeeded, for they relied on the approach of a French mission from the east by way of Abyssinia. A prince of the House of Orleans had been working hard to this end, but owing to the hostility of the natives of Southern Abyssinia that expedition had to fall back on Kukong. A Russian officer, Colonel Artomoroff, had struggled on down the river Sobat, but he and his band also had to retire.<sup>1</sup> The purport of these Franco-Russian designs is not yet known; but even so, we can see that the situation was one of great peril. Had the French and Russian officers from Abyssinia joined hands with Marchand at Fashoda, their Governments might have made it a point of honour to remain, and to claim for France a belt of territory extending from the confines of the French Congo eastwards to Obock on the Red Sea.

As it was, Marchand and his heroic little band were in much danger from the Dervishes when the Sirdar and his force steamed up to Fashoda. The interview between the two chiefs at that place was of historic interest. Sir Her-

<sup>1</sup> *Marchand l'Africain*, by C. Castellani, pp. 279-280. The author reveals his malice by the statement (p. 293) that the Sirdar, after the battle of Omdurman, ordered 14,000 Dervish wounded to be *éventrés*.

bert Kitchener congratulated the Major on his triumph of exploration, but claimed that he must plant the flag of the Khedive at Fashoda. M. Marchand declared that he would hoist it over the village himself. "Over the fort, Major," replied the Sirdar. "I cannot permit it," exclaimed the Major, "as the French flag is there." A reference by the Sirdar to his superiority of force produced no effect, the French commander stating that if it were used he and his men would die at their posts. He, however, requested the Sirdar to let the matter be referred to the Government at Paris, to which Sir Herbert assented. After exchanging courteous gifts they parted, the Sirdar leaving an Egyptian force in the village, and lodging a written protest against the presence of the French force.<sup>1</sup> He then proceeded up stream to the Sobat tributary, on the banks of which at Nassar he left half of a Sudanese battalion to bar the road on that side to geographical explorers provided with flags. He then returned to Khartum.

The sequel is well known. Lord Salisbury's Government behaved with unexpected firmness, asserting that the overthrow of the Mahdi brought again under the Egyptian flag all the lands which that leader had for a time occupied. The claim was not wholly convincing in the sphere of logic; but the victory of Omdurman gave it force. Clearly, then, whether Major Marchand was an emissary of civilisation or a pioneer of French rule, he had no *locus standi* on the Nile. The French Government before long gave way and recalled Major Marchand, who returned to France by way of Cairo. This tame end to what was a heroic struggle to extend French influence greatly incensed the Major; and at Cairo he made a speech,

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Egypt, No. 2 (1898), p. 9; No. 3 (1898), pp. 3-4.  
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declaring that for the present France was worsted in the valley of the Nile, but the day might come when she would be supreme.

It is generally believed that France gave way at this juncture partly because her navy was known to be unequal to a conflict with that of Great Britain, but also because Franco-German relations were none of the best. Or, in the language of the Parisian boulevards: "How do we know that while we are fighting the British for the Nile valley, Germany will not invade Lorraine?" As to the influences emanating from St. Petersburg contradictory statements have been made. Rumour asserted that the Czar sought to moderate the irritation in France and to bring about a peaceful settlement of the dispute; and this story won general acceptance. The astonishment was therefore great when, in the early part of the Russo-Japanese war, the Paris *Figaro* published documents which seemed to prove that he had assured the French Government of his determination to fulfil the terms of the alliance if matters came to the sword.

There we must leave the affair, merely noting that the Anglo-French agreement of March, 1899, peaceably ended the dispute and placed the whole of the Egyptian Sudan, together with the Bahr-el-Ghazal district and the greater part of the Libyan Desert, west of Egypt, under the Anglo-Egyptian sphere of influence. (See map at the end of this volume.)

The battle of Omdurman therefore ranks with the most decisive in modern history, not only in a military sense, but also because it extended British influence up the Nile valley as far as Uganda. Had French statesmen and M. Marchand achieved their aims, there is little doubt that a

solid wedge would have been driven through north-central Africa from west to east, from the Ubangi province of French Congoland to the mouth of the Red Sea. The Sirdar's triumph came just in time to thwart this design and to place in the hands that administered Egypt the control of the waters whence that land draws its life. Without crediting the stories that were put forth in the French press as to the possibility of France damming up the Nile at Fashoda and diverting its floods into the Bahr-el-Ghazal district, we may recognise that the control of that river by Egypt is a vital necessity, and that the nation which helped the Khedive to regain that control thereby established one more claim to a close partnership in the administration at Cairo. The reasonableness of that claim was finally admitted by France in the Anglo-French agreement of the year 1904.

That treaty set the seal, apparently, on a series of efforts of a strangely mixed character. The control of bondholders, the ill-advised strivings of Arabi, the armed intervention undertaken by Sir Beauchamp Seymour and Sir Garnet Wolseley, the forlorn hope of Gordon's Mission to Khartum, the fanaticism of the Mahdists, the diplomatic skill of Lord Cromer, the covert opposition of France and the Sultan, and the organising genius of Lord Kitchener—such is the medley of influences, ranging from the basest up to the noblest of which human nature is capable, that served to draw the Government of Great Britain deeper and deeper into the meshes of the Egyptian question, until the heroism, skill, and stubbornness of a few of her sons brought about results which would now astonish those who early in the eighties tardily put forth the first timid efforts at intervention.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PARTITION OF AFRICA

**I**N the opening up of new lands by European peoples the order of events is generally somewhat as follows: First come explorers, pioneers, or missionaries. These having thrown some light on the character of a land or of its people, traders follow in their wake; and in due course factories are formed and settlements arise. The ideas of the new-comers as to the rights of property and land-holding differ so widely from those of the natives, that quarrels and strifes frequently ensue. Warships and soldiers then appear on the scene; and the end of the old order of things is marked by the hoisting of the Union Jack, or the French or German tricolour. In the case of the expansion of Russia as we have seen, the procedure is far otherwise. But Africa has been for the most part explored, exploited, and annexed by agencies working from the sea and proceeding in the way just outlined.

The period since the year 1870 has for the most part, witnessed the operation of the last and the least romantic of these so-called civilising efforts. The great age of African exploration was then drawing to a close. In the year 1870 that devoted missionary explorer, David Livingstone, was lost to sight for many months owing to his earnest longing peacefully to solve the great problem of the waterways of Central Africa, and thus open up an easy

path for the suppression of the slave-trade. But when, in 1871, Mr. H. M. Stanley, the enterprising correspondent of the *New York Herald*, at the head of a rescue expedition, met the grizzled, fever-stricken veteran near Ujiji and greeted him with the words—"Mr. Livingstone, I presume"—the age of mystery and picturesqueness vanished away.

A change in the spirit and methods of exploration naturally comes about when the efforts of single individuals give place to collective enterprise,<sup>1</sup> and that change was now rapidly to come over the whole field of African exploration. The day of the Mungo Parks and Livingstones was passing away, and the day of associations and companies was at hand. In 1876, Leopold II., King of the Belgians, summoned to Brussels several of the leading explorers and geographers in order to confer on the best methods of opening up Africa. The specific results of this important Conference will be considered in the next chapter; but we may here note that, under the auspices of the "International Association for the Exploration and Civilisation of Africa" then founded, much pioneer work was carried out in districts remote from the river Congo. The vast continent also yielded up its secrets to travellers working their way in from the south and the north, so that in the late seventies the white races opened up to view vast and populous districts which imaginative chartographers in other ages had diversified with the Mountains of the Moon or with signs of the Zodiac and monstrosities of the animal creation.

<sup>1</sup> In saying this I do not underrate the achievements of explorers like Stanley, Thomson, Cameron, Schweinfurth, Pogge, Nachtigall, Pinto, de Brazza, Johnston, Wissmann, Holub, Lugard, and others; but apart from the first two, none of them made discoveries that can be called epoch-marking.

The last epoch-marking work carried through by an individual was accomplished by a Scottish explorer, whose achievements almost rivalled those of Livingstone. Joseph Thomson, a native of Dumfriesshire, succeeded in 1879 to the command of an exploring party which sought to open up the country around the lakes of Nyassa and Tanganyika. Four years later on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society, he undertook to examine the country behind Mombasa which was little better known than when Vasco da Gama first touched there. In this journey Thomson discovered two snow-capped mountains, Kilimanjaro and Kenia, and made known the resources of the country as far inland as the Victoria Nyanza. Considering the small resources he had at hand, and the cruel and warlike character of the Masai people through whom he journeyed, this journey was by far the most remarkable and important in the annals of exploration during the eighties. Thomson afterwards undertook to open a way from the Benuë, the great eastern affluent of the Niger, to lake Chad on the White Nile. Here again he succeeded beyond all expectation, while his tactful management of the natives led to political results of the highest importance, as will shortly appear.

These explorations and those of French, German, and Portuguese travellers served to bring nearly the whole of Africa within the ken of the civilised world, and revealed the fact that nearly all parts of tropical Africa had a distinct commercial value.

This discovery, we may point out, is the necessary preliminary to any great and sustained work of colonisation and annexation. Three conditions may be looked on as essential to such an effort. First, that new lands should



be known to be worth the labour of exploitation or settlement; second, that the older nations should possess enough vitality to pour settlers and treasure into them; and thirdly, that mechanical appliances should be available for the overcoming of natural obstacles.

Now, a brief glance at the great eras of exploring and colonising activity will show that in all these three directions the last thirty years have presented advantages which are unique in the history of the world. A few words will suffice to make good this assertion. The wars which constantly devastated the ancient world, and the feeble resources in regard to navigation wielded by adventurous captains, such as Hanno the Carthaginian, grievously hampered all the efforts of explorers by sea, while mechanical appliances were so weak as to cripple man's efforts at penetrating the interior. The same is true of the mediæval voyagers and travellers. Only the very princes among men, Columbus, Magellan, Vasco da Gama, Cabot, Cabral, Gilbert, and Raleigh, could have done what they did with ships that were mere playthings. Science had to do her work of long and patient research before man could hopefully face the mighty forces and malignant influences of the tropics. Nor was the advance of knowledge and invention sufficient by itself to equip man for successful war against the ocean, the desert, the forest, and the swamp. The political and social development of the older countries was equally necessary. In order that thousands of settlers should be able and ready to press in where the one great leader had shown the way, Europe had to gain something like peace and stability. Only thus, when the natural surplus of the white races could devote itself to the task of peacefully subduing the earth rather than to the hideous

work of mutual slaughter, could the life-blood of Europe be poured forth in fertilising streams into the waste places of the other continents.

The latter half of the eighteenth century promised for a brief space to inaugurate such a period of expansive life. The close of the Seven Years' War seemed to be the starting point for a peaceful campaign against the unknown; but the efforts of Cook, d'Entrecasteaux, and others then had little practical result, owing to the American War of Independence, and the great cycle of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. These in their turn left Europe too exhausted to accomplish much in the way of colonial expansion until the middle of the nineteenth century. Even then, when the steamship and the locomotive were at hand to multiply man's powers, there was, as yet, no general wish, except on the part of the more fortunate English-speaking peoples, to enter into man's new heritage. The problems of Europe had to be settled before the age of expansive activity could dawn in its full radiance. As has been previously shown, Europe was in an introspective mood up to the years 1870-1878.

Our foregoing studies have shown that the years following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, brought about a state of political equilibrium which made for peace and stagnation in Europe; and the natural forces of the Continent, cramped by the opposition of equal and powerful forces, took the line of least resistance—away from Europe. For Russia, the line of least resistance was in Central Asia. For all other European States it was the sea, and the new lands beyond.

Furthermore, in that momentous decade the steamship and locomotive were constantly gaining in efficiency;

electricity was entering the arena as a new and mighty force; by this time medical science had so far advanced as to screen man from many of the ills of which the tropics are profuse; and the repeating rifle multiplied the power of the white man in his conflicts with savage peoples. When all the advantages of the present generation are weighed in the balance against the meagre equipment of the earlier discoverers, the nineteenth century has scant claim for boasting over the fifteenth. In truth, its great achievements in this sphere have been practical and political. It has only fulfilled the rich promise of the age of the great navigators. Where they could but wonderingly skirt the fringes of a new world, the moderns have won their way to the heart of things and found many an Eldorado potentially richer than that which tempted the cupidity of Cortes and Pizarro.

In one respect the European statesmen of the recent past tower above their predecessors of the centuries before. In the eighteenth century the "mercantilist" craze for seizing new markets and shutting out all possible rivals brought about most of the wars that desolated Europe. In the years 1880-1890 the great Powers put forth sustained and successful efforts to avert the like calamity, and to cloak with the mantle of diplomacy the eager scrambles for the unclaimed lands of the world.

For various reasons the attention of statesmen turned almost solely on Africa. Central and South America were divided among States that were nominally civilised and enjoyed the protection of the Monroe Doctrine put forward by the United States. Australia was wholly British. In Asia the weakness of China was but dimly surmised; and Siam and Cochin China alone offered any field for settle-

ment or conquest by European peoples from the sea. In Polynesia several groups of islands were still unclaimed; but these could not appease the land-hunger of Europe. Africa alone provided void spaces proportionate to the needs and ambitions of the white man. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 served to bring the east coast of that continent within easy reach of Europe; and the discoveries on the upper Nile, Congo, and Niger opened a way into other large parts. Thus, by the year 1880, everything favoured the "partition of Africa."

Rumour, in the guise of hints given by communicative young attachés or "well-informed" correspondents, ascribes the first beginnings of the plans for the partition of Africa to the informal conversations of statesmen at the time of the Congress of Berlin (1878). Just as an architect safeguards his creation by providing a lightning-conductor, so the builder of the German Empire sought to divert from that fabric the revengeful storms that might be expected from the south-west. Other statesmen were no less anxious than Bismarck to draw away the attention of rivals from their own political preserves by pointing the way to more desirable waste domains. In short, the statesmen of Europe sought to plant in Africa the lightning-conductors that would safeguard the new arrangements in Europe, including that of Cyprus. The German and British Governments are known then to have passed on hints to that of France as to the desirability of her appropriating Tunis. The Republic entered into the schemes, with results which have already been considered (Vol. II., Chapter I.); and, as a sequel to the occupation of Tunis, plans were set on foot for the eventual conquest of the whole of the north-west of Africa (except Morocco and a

few British, Spanish, and Portuguese settlements) from Cape Bon to Cape Verde and thence nearly to the mouth of the river Niger. We may also note that in and after 1883 France matured her schemes for the conquest of part, and ultimately the whole, of Madagascar, a project which reached completion in the year 1885.<sup>1</sup>

The military occupation of Egypt by Great Britain in 1882 also served to quicken the interest of European Powers in Africa. It has been surmised that British acquiescence in French supremacy in Tunis, West Africa, and Madagascar had some connection with the events that transpired in Egypt, and that the perpetuation of British supremacy in the valley of the Nile was virtually bought by the surrender of most of the English political and trading interests in these lands, the lapse of which under the French "protective" régime caused much heart-burning in commercial circles.

Last among the special causes that concentrated attention on Africa was the activity of King Leopold's Association at Brussels in opening up the Congo district in the years 1879-1882. Everything therefore tended to make the ownership of tropical Africa the most complex question of the early part of the eighties.

For various reasons Germany was a little later than France and England in entering the field. The hostility of France on the west, and, after 1878, that of Russia on the east, made it inadvisable for the new Empire to give hostages to Fortune, in the shape of colonies, until by alliances it secured its position at home and possessed a fleet strong enough to defend distant possessions. In some

<sup>1</sup> For the French treaty of December 17, 1885, with Madagascar see *Parl. Papers, Africa*, No. 2 (1886).

measure the German Government had to curb the eagerness of its "colonial party." The present writer was in Germany in the year 1879, when the colonial propaganda was being pushed forward, and noted the eagerness in some quarters, and the distrust in others, with which pamphlets like that of Herr Fabri, *Bedarf Deutschland Colonien?* were received. Bismarck himself at first checked the "colonials," until he felt sure of the European situation. That, however, was cleared up to some extent by the inclusion of Italy in the compact which thus became the Triple Alliance (May, 1882), and by the advent to office of the pacific Chancellor de Giers at St. Petersburg a little later. There was therefore the less need officially to curb the colonising instinct of the Teutonic people. The formation of the German Colonial Society at Frankfurt in December, 1882, and the immense success attending its propaganda, spurred on the statesmen of Berlin to take action. They looked longingly (as they still do) towards Brazil, in whose southern districts their people had settled in large numbers; but over all that land the Monroe Doctrine spread its sheltering wings. A war with the United States would have been madness, and Germany therefore turned to Polynesia and Africa. We may note here that in 1885 she endeavoured to secure the Caroline Islands from Spain, whose title to them seemed to have lapsed; but Spanish pride flared up at the insult, and after a short space Bismarck soothed ruffled feelings at Madrid by accepting the mediation of the Pope, who awarded them to Spain, Germany, however, gaining the right to occupy an islet of the group as a coaling station.

Africa, however, absorbed nearly all the energy of the German colonial party. The forward wing of that party.

early in the year 1884 inaugurated an anti-British campaign in the Press, which probably had the support of the Government. As has been stated in Vol. II., Chapter I., that was the time when the Three Emperors' League showed signs of renewed vitality; and Bismarck, after signing the secret treaty of March 24, 1884 (later on ratified at Skiernevice), felt safe in pressing on colonial designs against England in Africa, especially as Russia was known to be planning equally threatening moves against the Queen's Empire in Asia. We do not know enough of what then went on between the German and Russian Chancellors to assert that they formed a definite agreement to harry British interests in those continents; but, judging from the general drift of Bismarck's diplomacy and from the "nagging" to which England was thenceforth subjected for two years, it seems highly probable that the policy ratified at Skiernevice aimed at marking time in European affairs and striding onwards in other continents at the expense of the Island Power.

The Anglophobes of the German press at once fell foul of everything British; and that well-known paper the *Kölnische Zeitung*, in an article of April 22, 1884, used the following words: "Africa is a large pudding which the English have prepared for themselves at other people's expense, and the crust of which is already fit for eating. Let us hope that our sailors will put a few pepper-corns into it on the Guinea coast, so that our friends on the Thames may not digest it too rapidly." The sequel will show whether the simile correctly describes either the state of John Bull's appetite or the easy aloofness of the Teutonic onlooker.

It will be convenient to treat this great and complex

subject on a topographical basis, and to begin with a survey of the affairs of East Africa, especially the districts on the mainland north and south of the island of Zanzibar. At that important trade centre, the natural starting-point then for the vast district of the Great Lakes, the influence of British and Indian traders had been paramount; and for many years the Sultan of Zanzibar had been "under the direct influence of the United Kingdom and of the Government of India."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, in and after 1880 German merchants, especially those of Hamburg, pressed in with great energy and formed plans for annexing the neighbouring territories on the mainland.

Their energy was in strange contrast to the lethargy shown by the British Government in the protection of Anglo-Indian trade interests. In the year 1878 the Sultan of Zanzibar, who held a large territory on the mainland, had offered the control of all the commerce of his dominions to Sir W. Mackinnon, Chairman of the British-India Steam Navigation Company; but, for some unexplained reason, the Beaconsfield Cabinet declined to be a party to this arrangement, which, therefore, fell through.<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that England and France had in 1862 agreed to recognise the independence of the Sultan of Zanzibar, the Germans deemed the field to be clear, and early in November, 1884, Dr. Karl Peters and two other enthusiasts of the colonial party landed at Zanzibar, disguised as mechanics, with the aim of winning new lands for their Fatherland. They had with them several blank treaty forms, the hidden potency of which was soon to be felt by dusky potentates on the mainland. Before long they succeeded in per-

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 1 (1886), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Partition of Africa*, by J. Scott Keltie (1893), pp. 157, 225.



suading some of these novices in diplomacy to set their marks to these documents, an act which converted them into subjects of the Kaiser, and speedily secured sixty thousand square miles for the German tricolour. It is said that the Government of Berlin either had no knowledge of, or disapproved of, these proceedings; and, when Earl Granville ventured on some representations respecting them, he received the reply, dated November 28, 1884, that the Imperial Government had no design of obtaining a protectorate over Zanzibar.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to reconcile these statements with the undoubted fact that on February 17, 1885, the German Emperor gave his sanction to the proceedings of Dr. Peters by extending his suzerainty over the signatory chiefs.<sup>2</sup> This event caused soreness among British explorers and Indian traders who had been the first to open up the country to civilisation. Nevertheless, the Gladstone Ministry took no effective steps to safeguard their interests.

In defence of their academic treatment of this matter some considerations of a general nature may be urged.

The need of colonies felt by Germany was so natural, so imperious, that it could not be met by the high and dry legal argument as to the priority of Great Britain's commercial interests. Such an attitude would have involved war with Germany about East Africa and war with France about West Africa, at the very time when the English were on the brink of hostilities with Russia about Merv, and were actually fighting the Mahdists behind Suakim. The "weary Titan"—to use Matthew Arnold's picturesque phrase—was then overburdened. The motto "Live and let live" was for the time the most reasonable, provided

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 1 (1886), p. 1.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-20.

that it was not interpreted in a weak and maudlin way on essential points.

Many critics, however, maintain that Mr. Gladstone's and Lord Granville's diplomatic dealings with Germany in the years 1884 and 1885 displayed most lamentable weakness, even when Dr. Peters and others were known to be working hard at the back of Zanzibar, with the results that have been noted. In April, 1885, the Cabinet ordered Sir John Kirk, British representative at Zanzibar, and founder of the hitherto unchallenged supremacy of his nation along that coast, forthwith to undo the work of a lifetime by "maintaining friendly relations" with the German authorities at that port. This, of course, implied a tacit acknowledgment by Britain of what amounted to a German protectorate over the mainland possessions of the Sultan. It is not often that a government, in its zeal for "live and let live," imposes so humiliating a task on a British representative. The Sultan did not take the serene and philosophic view of the situation that was held at Downing Street, and the advent of a German squadron was necessary in order to procure his consent to these arrangements (August-December, 1885).<sup>1</sup>

The Blue Book dealing with Zanzibar (Africa, No. 1, 1886) by no means solves the riddle of the negotiations which went on between London and Berlin early in the year 1885. From other sources we know that the most ardent of the German colonials were far from satisfied with their triumph. Curious details have appeared showing that their schemes included the laying of a trap for the Sultan of Zanzibar, which failed owing to clumsy baiting and the loquacity of the would-be captor. Lord Rose-

<sup>1</sup> J. Scott Keltie, *The Partition of Africa*, ch. xv.

bery also managed, according to German accounts, to get the better of Count Herbert Bismarck in respect of St. Lucia Bay (see map end Vol. II.), and districts on the Benuë River; so that this may perhaps be placed over against the losses sustained by Britain on the coast opposite Zanzibar. Even there, as we have seen, results did not fully correspond to the high hopes entertained by the German Chauvinists.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime (June, 1885) the Salisbury Cabinet came into office for a short time, but the evil effects of the slackness of British diplomacy were not yet at an end. At this time British merchants, especially those of Manchester, were endeavouring to develop the mountainous country around the giant cone of Mt. Kilimanjaro, where Mr. (now Sir) Harry Johnston had, in September, 1884, secured some trading and other rights with certain chiefs. A company had been formed in order to further British interests, and this soon became the Imperial British East Africa Company, which aspired to territorial control in the parts north of those claimed by Dr. Peters's Company. A struggle took place between the two companies, the German East Africa Company laying claim to the Kilimanjaro district. Again it proved that the Germans had the more effective backing, and, despite objections urged by the English Foreign Minister, Lord Rosebery, against the proceedings of German agents in that tract, the question of ownership was referred to the decision of an Anglo-German boundary commission.

Lord Iddesleigh assumed control of the Foreign Office in August, but the advent of the Conservatives to power in no

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of his History*, iii., pp. 135, 144-145. Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 1 (1886), pp. 39-45, 61 *et seq.*; also No. 3 (1886), pp. 4, 15.  
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way helped on the British case. By an agreement between the two Powers, dated November 1, 1886, the Kilimanjaro district was assigned to Germany. From the northern spurs of that mountain the dividing line ran in a north-westerly direction towards the Victoria Nyanza. The same agreement recognised the authority of the Sultan of Zanzibar as extending over the island of that name, those of Pemba and Mafia, and over a strip of coastline ten nautical miles in width; but the ownership of the district of Vitu north of Mombasa was left open.<sup>1</sup> (See map end Vol. II.)

On the whole, the skill which dispossessed a sovereign of most of his rights, under a plea of diplomatic rearrangements and the advancement of civilisation, must be pronounced unrivalled; and Britain cut a sorry figure as the weak and unwilling accessory to this act. The only satisfactory feature in the whole proceeding was Britain's success in leasing from the Sultan of Zanzibar administrative rights over the coast region around Mombasa. The gain of that part secured unimpeded access from the coast to the northern half of Lake Victoria Nyanza. The German Company secured similar rights over the coastline of their district, and in 1890 bought it outright. By an agreement of December, 1896, the river Rovuma was recognised by Germany and Portugal as the boundary of their East African possessions.

The lofty hopes once entertained by the Germans as to the productiveness of their part of East Africa have been but partially realised.<sup>2</sup> Harsh treatment of the natives

<sup>1</sup> Banning, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-50; Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 3 (1887), pp. 46, 59.

<sup>2</sup> See the Report on German East Africa for 1900, in the English *Diplomatic and Consular Reports*.

brought about a formidable revolt in 1888-89. The need of British co-operation in the crushing of this revolt served to bring Germany to a more friendly attitude towards England. Probably the resignation, or rather the dismissal of Bismarck by the present Emperor, in March, 1890, also tended to lessen the friction between England and Germany. The Prince while in retirement expressed strong disapproval of the East African policy of his successor, Count Caprivi.

A more conciliatory spirit found expression in the Anglo-German agreement of July 1, 1890, which delimited the districts claimed by the two nations around the Victoria Nyanza in a sense favourable to Great Britain and disappointing to that indefatigable treaty-maker Dr. Peters. It acknowledged British claims to the northern half of the shores and waters of that great lake and to the valley of the upper Nile, as also to the coast of the Indian Ocean about Vitu and thence northwards to Kismayu.

On the other hand, Germany acquired the land north of Lake Nyassa, where British interests had been paramount. The same agreement applied both to the British and German lands in question the principle of free or unrestricted transit of goods, as also between the Great Lakes. Germany further recognised a British Protectorate over the islands held by the Sultan of Zanzibar, reserving certain rights for German commerce in the case of the Island of Mafia. Finally, Great Britain ceded to Germany the Island of Heligoland in the North Sea. On both sides of the North Sea the compact aroused a storm of hostile comment, which perhaps served to emphasise its fairness.<sup>1</sup> Bismarck's opinion deserves quotation:

<sup>1</sup>Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 6 (1890).

"Zanzibar ought not to have been left to the English. It would have been better to maintain the old arrangement. We could then have had it at some later time when England required our good offices against France or Russia. In the meantime our merchants, who are cleverer, and, like the Jews, are satisfied with smaller profits, would have kept the upper hand in business. To regard Heligoland as an equivalent shows more imagination than sound calculation. In the event of war it would be better for us that it should be in the hands of a neutral Power. It is difficult and most expensive to fortify." <sup>1</sup>

The passage is instructive as showing the aim of Bismarck's colonial policy, namely, to wait until England's difficulties were acute (or perhaps to augment those difficulties, as he certainly did by furthering Russian schemes against Afghanistan in 1884-85 <sup>2</sup>), and then to apply remorseless pressure at all points where the colonial or commercial interests of the two countries clashed.

The more his policy is known, the more dangerous to England it is seen to have been, especially in the years 1884-86. In fact, those persons who declaim against German colonial ambitions of to-day may be asked to remember that the extra-European questions recently at issue between Great Britain and Germany are trivial when compared with the momentous problems that were peacefully solved by the agreement of the year 1890. Of what importance are Samoa, Kiao-chow, and the problem of Morocco, compared with the questions of access to the great lakes of Africa and the control of the lower Niger?

<sup>1</sup>*Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of his History*, iii., p. 353. See, too, S. Whitman, *Personal Reminiscences of Prince Bismarck*, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>*Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of his History*, iii., pp. 124, 133; also see pp. 192 of this work.

It would be unfair to Wilhelm II., as also to the Salisbury Cabinet, not to recognise the statesmanlike qualities which led to the agreement of July 1, 1890—one of the most solid gains peacefully achieved for the cause of civilisation throughout the nineteenth century.

Among its many benefits may be reckoned the virtual settlement of long and tangled disputes for supremacy in Uganda. We have no space in which to detail the rivalries of French and British missionaries and agents at the Court of King M'tesa and his successor M'wanga, or the futile attempt of Dr. Peters to thrust in German influence. Even the Anglo-German agreement of 1890 did not end the perplexities of the situation; for, though the British East Africa Company (to which a charter had been granted in 1888) thenceforth had the chief influence on the northern shores of Victoria Nyanza, the British Government declined to assume any direct responsibility for so inaccessible a district. Thanks, however, to the activity and tact of Captain Lugard, difficulties were cleared away, with the result that the large and fertile territory of Uganda (formerly included in the Khedive's dominions) became a British Protectorate in August, 1894 (see Chapter VI.).

The significance of the events just described will be apparent when it is remembered that British East Africa, inclusive of Uganda and the upper Nile basin, comprises altogether 670,000 square miles, to a large extent fertile, and capable of settlement by white men in the more elevated tracts of the interior. German East Africa contains 385,000 square miles, and is also destined to have a future that will dwarf that of many of the secondary States of to-day.

The prosperity of British East Africa was greatly en-

hanced by the opening of a railway, 580 miles long, from Mombasa to Victoria Nyanza in 1902. Among other benefits, it has cut the ground from under the slave-trade, which used to depend on the human beast of burden for the carriage of all heavy loads.<sup>1</sup>

The Anglo-German agreement of 1890 also cleared up certain questions between Britain and Germany relating to South-West Africa which had made bad blood between the two countries. In and after the year 1882 the attention of the colonial party in Germany was turned to the district north of the Orange River, and in the spring of the year 1883 Herr Lüderitz founded a factory and hoisted the German flag at Angra Pequena. There are grounds for thinking that that district was coveted, not so much for its intrinsic value, which is slight, as because it promised to open up communications with the Boer Republics. Lord Granville ventured to express his doubts on that subject to Count Herbert Bismarck, whom the Chancellor had sent to London in the summer of 1884 in order to take matters out of the hands of the too Anglophobe ambassador, Count Münster. Anxious to show his mettle, young Bismarck fired up, and informed Lord Granville that his question was one of mere curiosity; later on he informed him that it was a matter which did not concern him.<sup>2</sup>

It must be admitted, however, that the British Government had acted in a dilatory and ineffective manner. Sir Donald Currie had introduced a deputation to Lord Derby,

<sup>1</sup> For the progress and prospects of this important colony, see Sir G. Portal, *The British Mission to Uganda in 1893*; Sir Charles Elliot, *British East Africa* (1905); also Lugard, *Our East African Empire*; Sir H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*.

<sup>2</sup> *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of his History*, iii., p. 120.



Colonial Minister in the Gladstone Cabinet, which warned him seriously as to German aims on the coast of Damaraland; in reply to which that phlegmatic Minister stated that Germany was not a colonising Power, and that the annexation of those districts would be resented by Great Britain as an "unfriendly act."<sup>1</sup> In November, 1883, the German ambassador inquired whether British protection would be accorded to a few German settlers on the coast of Damaraland. No decisive answer was given, though the existence of British interests there was affirmed. Then, when Germany claimed the right to annex it, a counter-claim was urged from Whitehall (probably at the instigation of the Cape Government) that the land in question was a subject of close interest to England, as it might be annexed in the future. It was against this belated and illogical plea that Count Bismarck was sent to lodge a protest; and in August, 1884, Germany clinched the matter by declaring Angra Pequena and surrounding districts to be German territory. (See note at the end of the chapter.)

In this connection we may remark that Angra Pequena had recently figured as a British settlement on German maps, including that of Stieler of the year 1882. Walfisch Bay, farther to the north, was left to the Union Jack, that flag having been hoisted there by official sanction in 1878 owing to the urgent representations of Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor of Cape Colony. The rest of the coast was left to Germany; the Gladstone Government informed that of Berlin that no objection would be taken to her occupation of that territory. Great annoyance was felt at the

<sup>1</sup> See Sir D. Currie's paper on South Africa to the members of the Royal Colonial Institute, April 10, 1888 (*Proceedings*, xix., p. 240).

Cape at what was looked on as an uncalled-for surrender of British claims, especially when the Home Government failed to secure just treatment for the British settlers. Sir Charles Dilke states in his *Problems of Greater Britain* that only the constant protests of the Cape Ministry prevented the authorities at Whitehall from complying with German unceasing requests for the cession of Walfisch Bay, doubtless as an item for exchange during the negotiations of 1889-90.<sup>1</sup>

We may add here that in 1886 Germany defined the northern limits of "South-West Africa"—such was the name of the new colony—by an agreement with Portugal; and in 1890 an article of the Anglo-German agreement above referred to gave an eastward extension of that northern border which brought it to the banks of the river Zambesi.

The British Government took a firmer stand in a matter that closely concerned the welfare of Natal and the relations of the Transvaal Republic to Germany. In 1884 some German prospectors sought to gain a footing in St. Lucia Bay in Zululand and to hoist the German flag. The full truth on this interesting matter is not yet known; it formed a pendant to the larger question of Delagoa Bay, which must be briefly noticed here.

Friction had arisen between Great Britain and Portugal over conflicting claims respecting Delagoa Bay and its adjoining lands; and in this connection it may be of interest to note that the Disraeli Ministry had earlier missed an opportunity of buying out Portuguese claims. The late Lord Carnarvon stated that, when he took the portfolio for colonial affairs in that Ministry, he believed the purchase

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, i., p. 502.

might have been effected for a comparatively small sum. Probably the authorities at Lisbon were aroused to a sense of the potential value of their Laurenço Marquez domain by the scramble for Africa which began early in the eighties; and it must be regretted that the British Government, with the lack of foresight which has so often characterised it, let slip the opportunity of securing Delagoa Bay until its value was greatly enhanced. It then agreed to refer the questions in dispute to the arbitration of General MacMahon, President of the French Republic (1875). As has generally happened when foreign potentates have adjudicated on British interests, his verdict was wholly hostile to England. It even assigned to Portugal a large district to the south of Delagoa Bay which the Portuguese had never thought of claiming from its native inhabitants, the Tongas.<sup>1</sup> In fact, a narrative of all the gains which have accrued to Portugal in Delagoa Bay, and thereafter to the people who controlled its railway to Pretoria, would throw a sinister light on the connection that has too often subsisted between the noble theory of arbitration and the profitable practice of peacefully willing away, or appropriating, the rights and possessions of others. Portugal soon proved to be unable to avail herself of the opportunities opened up by the gift unexpectedly awarded her by MacMahon. She was unable to control either the Tongas or the Boers.

England having been ruled out, there was the chance for some other Power to step in and acquire St. Lucia Bay, one of the natural outlets of the southern part of the Transvaal Republic. It is an open secret that the forerunners of the "colonial party" in Germany had already sought to open

<sup>1</sup> Sir C. Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain*, i., pp. 553-556.

up closer relations with the Boer Republics. In 1876 the President of the Transvaal, accompanied by a Dutch member of the Cape Parliament, visited Berlin, probably with the view of reciprocating those advances. They had an interview with Bismarck, the details of which are not fully known. Nothing however, came of it at the time, owing to Bismarck's preoccupation in European affairs. Early in the eighties, the German colonial party, then beginning its campaign, called attention repeatedly to the advantages of gaining a foothold in or near Delagoa Bay; but the rise of colonial feeling in Germany led to a similar development in the public sentiment of Portugal, and indeed of all lands; so that, by the time that Bismarck was won over to the cause of Teutonic expansion, the Portuguese refused to barter away any of their ancient possessions. This probably accounts for the concentration of German energies on other parts of the South African coast, which, though less valuable in themselves, might serve as *points d'appui* for German political agents and merchants in their future dealings with the Boers, who were then striving to gain control over Bechuanaland. The points selected by the Germans for their action were on the coast of Damaraland, as already stated, and St. Lucia Bay in Zululand, a position which President Burgers had striven to secure for the Transvaal in 1878.

In reference to St. Lucia Bay our narrative must be shadowy in outline owing to the almost complete secrecy with which the German Government wisely shrouds a failure. The officials and newspaper writers of Germany have not yet contracted the English habit of proclaiming their intentions beforehand and of parading before the world their recriminations in case of a fiasco. All that can,

be said, then, with certainty is that in the autumn of 1884 a German trader named Einwold attempted to gain a footing in St. Lucia Bay and to prepare the way for the recognition of German claims if all went well. In fact, he could either be greeted as a *Mehrer des Reichs*, or be disowned as an unauthorised busybody.

We may here cite passages from the Diary of Dr. Busch, Bismarck's secretary, which prove that the State took a lively interest in Einwold's adventure. On February 25, 1885, Busch had a conversation with Herr Andrae, in the course of which they "rejoiced at England's difficulties in the Sudan, and I expressed the hope that Wolseley's head would soon arrive in Cairo, nicely pickled and packed." Busch then referred to British friction with Russia in Afghanistan and with France in Burmah, and then put the question to Andrae, "'Have we given up South Africa; or is the Lucia Bay affair still open?' He said that the matter was still under consideration."<sup>1</sup>

It has since transpired that the British Government might have yielded to pressure from Berlin, had not greater pressure been exercised from Natal and from British merchants and shipowners interested in the South African trade. Sir Donald Currie, in the paper already referred to, stated that he could easily have given particulars of the means which had to be used in order to spur on the British Government to decisive action. Unfortunately he was discreetly reticent, and merely stated that, not only St. Lucia Bay, but the whole of the coast between Natal and the Delagoa Bay district was then in question, and that the Gladstone Ministry was finally induced to telegraph instructions to Cape Town for the despatch of a cruiser to

<sup>1</sup> *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of his History*, iii., p. 132.

assert British claims to St. Lucia Bay. H. M. S. *Goshawk* at once steamed thither, and hoisted the British flag, by virtue of a treaty made with a Zulu chief in 1842. Then ensued the usual interchange of angry notes between Berlin and London; Bismarck and Count Herbert sought to win over, or browbeat, Lord Rosebery, then Colonial Minister. In this, however, Bismarck failed; and the explanation of the failure given to Busch was that Lord Rosebery was too clever for him and "quite mesmerised him." On May 7, 1885, Germany gave up her claims to that important position, in consideration of gaining at the expense of England in the Cameroons.<sup>1</sup> Here again a passage from Busch's record deserves quotation. In a conversation which he had with Bismarck on January 5, 1886, he put the question:

" 'Why have we not been able to secure the Santa Lucia Bay?' I asked. 'Ah!' he replied, 'it is not so valuable as it seemed to be at first. People who were pursuing their own interests on the spot represented it to be of greater importance than it really was. And then the Boers were not disposed to take any proper action in the matter. The bay would have been valuable to us if the distance from the Transvaal were not so great. And the English attached so much importance to it that they declared it was impossible for them to give it up, and they ultimately conceded a great deal to us in New Guinea and Zanzibar. In colonial matters we must not take too much in hand at a time, and we already have enough for a beginning. We must now hold rather with the English, while, as you know, we were formerly more on the French side.'<sup>2</sup> But,

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 6 (1885), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> He here referred to the Franco-German agreement of December 24, 1885, whereby the two Powers amicably settled the boundaries of their west African lands, and Germany agreed not to

as the last elections in France show, every one of any importance there had to make a show of hostility to us.' "

This passage explains, in part at least, why Bismarck gave up the nagging tactics latterly employed towards Great Britain. Evidently he had hoped to turn the current of thought in France from the Alsace-Lorraine question to the lands over the seas, and his henchmen in the Press did all in their power to persuade people, both in Germany and France, that England was the enemy. The Anglophobe agitation was fierce while it lasted; but its artificiality is revealed by the passage just quoted.

We may go further, and say that the more recent outbreak of Anglophobia in Germany may probably be ascribed to the same official stimulus; and it, too, may be expected to cease when the politicians of Berlin see that it no longer pays to twist the British lion's tail. That sport ceased in and after 1886, because France was found still to be the enemy. Frenchmen did not speak much about Alsace-Lorraine. They followed Gambetta's advice: "Never speak about it, but always think of it." The recent French elections revealed that fact to Bismarck and, lo! the campaign of calumny against England at once slackened.

We may add that two German traders settled on the coast of Pondoland, south of Natal; and in August, 1885, the statesman of Berlin put forth feelers to Whitehall with a view to a German Protectorate of that coast. They met with a decisive repulse.<sup>1</sup>

thwart French designs on Tahiti, the Society Isles, the New Hebrides, etc. See Banning, *Le Partage politique de l'Afrique*, pp. 22-26.

<sup>1</sup> Cape Colony, Papers on Pondoland, 1887, pp. 1, 41. For the progress of German South-West Africa and East Africa, see Parl. Papers, Germany, Nos. 474, 528, 2790.

Meanwhile, the dead-set made by Germany, France, and Russia against British interests in the years 1883-85 had borne fruit in a way little expected by those Powers, but fully consonant with previous experience. It awakened British statesmen from their apathy, and led them to adopt measures of unwonted vigour. The year 1885 saw French plans in Indo-China checked by the annexation of Burmah. German designs in South Africa undoubtedly quickened the resolve of the Gladstone Ministry to save Bechuanaland for the British Empire.

It is impossible here to launch upon the troublous sea of Boer politics, especially as the conflict naturally resulting from two irreconcilable sets of ideas outlasted the century with which this work is concerned. We can therefore only state that filibustering bands of Boers had raided parts of Bechuanaland, and seemed about to close the trade-route northwards to the Zambesi. This alone would have been a serious bar to the prosperity of Cape Colony; but the loyalists had lost their confidence in the British Government since the events of 1880, while a large party in the Cape Ministry, including at that time Mr. Cecil Rhodes, seemed willing to abet the Boers in all their proceedings. A Boer deputation went to England in the autumn of 1883, and succeeded in cajoling Lord Derby into a very remarkable surrender. Among other things, he conceded to them an important strip of land west of the Harts River.<sup>1</sup>

Far from satisfying them, this act encouraged some of their more restless spirits to set up two republics named Stellaland and Goshen. There, however, they met a tough antagonist, John Mackenzie. That devoted missionary,

<sup>1</sup> For the negotiations and the Convention of February 27, 1884, see Papers relating to the South African Republic, 1887.



after long acquaintance with Boers and Bechuanas, saw how serious would be the loss to the native tribes and to the cause of civilisation if the raiders were allowed to hold the routes to the interior. By degrees he aroused the sympathy of leading men in the Press, who thereupon began to whip up the laggards of Whitehall and Downing Street. Consequently, Mackenzie, on his return to South Africa, was commissioned to act as British Resident in Bechuanaland, and in that capacity he declared that country to be under British protection (May, 1884). At once the Dutch throughout South Africa raised a hue and cry against him, in which Mr. Rhodes joined, with the result that he was recalled on July 30th.

His place was taken by a statesman whose exploits raised him to a high place among builders of the Empire. However much Cecil Rhodes differed from Mackenzie on the native question and other affairs, he came to see the urgent need of saving for the Empire the central districts which, as an old Boer said, formed "the key to Africa." Never were the loyalists more dispirited at the lack of energy shown by the Home Government; and never was there greater need of firmness. In a sense, however, the action of the Germans on the coast of Damaraland (August-October, 1884) helped to save the situation. The imperious need of keeping open the route to the interior, which would be closed to trade if ever the Boers and Germans joined hands, spurred on the Gladstone Ministry to support the measures proposed by Mr. Rhodes and the loyalists of Cape Colony. When the whole truth on that period comes to be known, it will probably be found that British rule was in very grave danger in the latter half of the year 1884.

Certainly no small expedition ever accomplished so much for the Empire, at so trifling a cost and without the effusion of blood, as that which was now sent out. It was entrusted to Sir Charles Warren. He recruited his force mainly from the loyalists of South Africa, though a body named Methuen's horse went out from England. In all it numbered nearly five thousand men. Moving quickly from the Orange River through Griqualand West, he reached the banks of the Vaal at Barkly Camp, by January 22, 1885, that is, only six weeks after his arrival at Cape Town. At the same time three thousand troops took their station in the north of Natal in readiness to attack the Transvaal Boers, should they fall upon Warren. It soon transpired, however, that the more respectable Boers had little sympathy with the raiders in Bechuanaland. These again were so far taken aback by the speed of Warren's movements and the thoroughness of his organisation as to manifest little desire to attack a force which seemed ever ready at all points and spied on them from balloons. The behaviour of the commander was as tactful as his dispositions were effective; and, as a result of these favouring circumstances (which the superficial may ascribe to luck), he was able speedily to clear Bechuanaland of those intruders.

On September 30th it became what it has since remained—a British possession, safeguarding the route into the interior and holding apart the Transvaal Boers from the contact with the Germans of Damaraland which could hardly fail to produce an explosion. The importance of

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Charles Warren's short account of the expedition, in the *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute for 1885-86*, pp. 5-45; also Mackenzie's *Austral Africa*, ii., *ad init.*, and *John Mackenzie*, by W. D. Mackenzie (1902).

the latter fact has already been made clear. The significance of the former will be apparent when we remember that Mr. Rhodes, in his later and better-known character of Empire-builder, was able from Bechuanaland as a base to extend the domain of his chartered Company up to the southern end of Lake Tanganyika in the year 1889.

It is well known that Rhodes hoped to extend the domain of his Company as far north as the southern limit of the British East Africa Company. Here, however, the Germans forestalled him by their energy in Central Africa. Finally, the Anglo-German agreement of 1890 assigned to Germany all the *hinterland* of Zanzibar as far west as the frontier of the Congo Free State, thus sterilising the idea of an all-British route from the Cape to Cairo, which possessed for some minds an alliterative and all-compelling charm.

As for the future of the vast territory which came to be known popularly as Rhodesia, we may note that the part bordering on Lake Nyassa was severed from the South Africa Company in 1894, and was styled the British Central Africa Protectorate. In 1895 the south of Bechuanaland was annexed to Cape Colony, a step greatly regretted by many well-wishers of the natives. The intelligent chief, Khama, visited England in that year, mainly in order to protest against the annexation of his lands by Cape Colony and by the South Africa Company. In this he was successful; he and other chiefs are directly under the protection of the Crown, but parts of the north and east of Bechuanaland are administered by the British South Africa Company. The tracts between the rivers Limpopo and Zambesi, and thence north to the Tanganyika, form a territory vaster and more populous than any which has

in recent years been administered by a company; and its rule leaves much to be desired.

It is time now to turn to the expansion of German and British spheres of influence in the Bight of Guinea and along the course of the rivers Niger and Benuë. In the innermost part of the Bight of Guinea, British commercial interests had been paramount up to about 1880; but about that time German factories were founded in increasing numbers, and, owing to the dilatory action of British firms, gained increasing hold on the trade of several districts. The respect felt by native chiefs for British law was evinced by a request of five of the "Kings" of the Cameroons that they might have it introduced into their lands (1879). Authorities at Downing Street and Whitehall were deaf to the request. In striking contrast to this was the action of the German Government, which early in the year 1884 sent Dr. Nachtigall to explore those districts. The German ambassador in London informed Earl Granville on April 19, 1884, that the object of his mission was "to complete the information now in possession of the Foreign Office at Berlin on the state of German commerce on that coast." He therefore requested that the British authorities there should be furnished with suitable recommendations for his reception.<sup>1</sup> This was accordingly done, and, after receiving hospitality at various consulates, he made treaties with native chiefs, and hoisted the German flag at several points previously considered to be under British influence. This was especially the case on the coast to the east of the river Niger.

The British Government was incensed at this procedure,

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 1 (1885), p. 14.

and all the more so as plans were then on foot for consolidating British influence in the Cameroons. On that river there were six British and two German firms, and the natives had petitioned for the protection of England; but H.M.S. *Flirt*, on steaming into that river on July 20th, found that the German flag had been hoisted by the officers of the German warship *Möwe*. Nachtigall had signed a treaty with "King Bell" on July 12th, whereby native habits were to remain unchanged and no customs dues levied, but the whole district was placed under German suzerainty.<sup>1</sup> The same had happened at neighbouring districts. Thereupon Consul Hewitt, in accordance with instructions from London, established British supremacy at the Oil rivers, Old and New Calabar, and several other points adjoining the Niger delta as far west as Lagos.

For some time there was much friction between London and Berlin on these questions, but on May 7, 1885, an agreement was finally arrived at, a line drawn between the Rio del Rey and the Old Calabar River being fixed on as the boundary of the spheres of influence of the two Powers, while Germany further recognised the sovereignty of Britain over St. Lucia Bay in Zululand, and promised not to annex any land between Natal and Delagoa Bay.<sup>2</sup> Many censures were lavished on this agreement, which certainly sacrificed important British interests in the Cameroons in consideration of the abandonment of German claims on the Zulu coast which were legally untenable. Thus, by pressing on various points formerly regarded as under British influence, Bismarck secured at least one considerable district—one moreover that is the healthiest

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 6 (1885), p. 2.

on the West African coast. Subsequent expansion made of the Cameroons a colony containing some 140,000 square miles with more than 1,100,000 inhabitants.

It is an open secret that Germany was working hard in 1884-85 to get a foothold on the Lower Niger and its great affluent, the Benuë. Two important colonial societies combined to send out Herr Flegel in the spring of 1885 to secure possession of districts on those rivers where British interests had hitherto been paramount. Fortunately for the cause of Free Trade (which Germany had definitely abandoned in 1880) private individuals had had enough foresight and determination to step in with effect, and to repair the harm which otherwise must have come from the absorption of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues in home affairs.

In the present case, British merchants were able to save the situation, because in the year 1879 the firms having important business dealings with the river Niger combined to form the National African Company in order to withstand the threatening pressure of the French advance soon to be described. In 1882 the Company's powers were extended, largely owing to Sir George Taubman Goldie, and it took the name of the National African Company. Extending its operations up the river Niger, it gradually cut the ground from under the French companies which had been formed for the exploitation and ultimate acquisition of those districts, so that after a time the French shareholders agreed to merge themselves in the British enterprise.

This important step was taken just in time to forestall German action from the side of the Cameroons, which threatened to shut out British trade from the banks of the

river Benuë and the shores of Lake Chad. Forewarned of this danger, Sir George Goldie and his directors urged that bold and successful explorer, Mr. Joseph Thomson, to safeguard the nation's interests along the Benuë and north thereof. Thomson had scarcely recovered from the hardships of his epoch-marking journey through Masailand; but he now threw himself into the breach, quickly travelled from England to the Niger, and by his unrivalled experience alike of the means of travel and of native ways managed to frame treaties with the Sultans of Sokoto and Gando, before the German envoy reached his destination (1885). The energy of the National African Company and the promptitude and tact of Mr. Thomson secured for his countrymen undisputed access to Lake Chad and the great country peopled by the warlike Haussas.<sup>1</sup>

Seeing that both France and Germany seek to restrict foreign trade in their colonies, while Great Britain gives free access to all merchants on equal terms, we may regard this brilliant success as a gain, not only for the United Kingdom, but for the commerce of the world. The annoyance expressed in influential circles in Germany at the failure of the plans for capturing the trade of the Benuë district served to show the magnitude of the interests which had there been looked upon as prospectively and exclusively German. The delimitation of the new British territory with the Cameroon territory and its north-eastern extension to Lake Chad was effected by an Anglo-German agreement of 1886, Germany gaining part of the upper Benuë and the southern shore of Lake Chad. In all, the

<sup>1</sup> This greatest among recent explorers of Africa died in 1895. He never received any appropriate reward from the Court for his great services to science and to the nation at large.

territories controlled by the British Company comprised about 500,000 square miles (more than four times the size of the United Kingdom).

It is somewhat characteristic of British colonial procedure in that period that many difficulties were raised as to the grant of a charter to the company which had carried through this work of national importance; but on July 10, 1886, it gained that charter with the title of the Royal Niger Company. The chief difficulties since that date have arisen from French aggressions on the west, which will be noticed presently.

In 1897 the Royal Niger Company overthrew the power of the turbulent and slave-raiding Sultan of Nupe, near the Niger, but, as has so often happened, the very success of the Company doomed it to absorption by the nation. On January 1, 1900, its governing powers were handed over to the Crown; the Union Jack replaced the private flag; and Sir Frederick Lugard added to the services which he had rendered to the Empire in Uganda by undertaking the organisation of this great and fertile colony. In an interesting paper, read before the Royal Geographical Society in November, 1903, he thus characterised his administrative methods: "to rule through the native chiefs, and, while checking the extortionate levies of the past, fairly to assess and enforce the ancient tribute. By this means a fair revenue will be assured to the emirs, in lieu of their former source of wealth, which consisted in slaves and slave-raiding, and in extortionate taxes on trade. . . . Organised slave-raiding has become a thing of the past in the country where it lately existed in its worst form." He further stated that the new colony had made satisfactory progress; but light railways were much needed to connect



Lake Chad with the upper Nile and with the Gulf of Guinea. The area of Nigeria (apart from the Niger Coast Protectorate) is about 500,000 square miles.<sup>1</sup>

The result, then, of the activity of French and Germans in West Africa has, on the whole, not been adverse to British interests. The efforts leading to these noteworthy results above would scarcely have been made but for some external stimulus. As happened in the days of Dupleix and Montcalm, and again at the time of the little-known efforts of Napoleon I. to appropriate the middle of Australia, the spur of foreign competition furthered not only the cause of exploration but also the expansion of the British Empire.

The expansion of French influence in Africa has been far greater than that of Germany; and, while arousing less attention on political grounds, it has probably achieved more solid results—a fact all the more remarkable when we bear in mind the exhaustion of France in 1871, and the very slow growth of her population at home. From 1872 to 1901 the number of her inhabitants rose from 36,103,000 to 38,962,000; while in the same time the figures for the German Empire showed an increase from 41,230,000 to 56,862,000. To some extent, then, the colonial growth of France is artificial; at least it is not based on the imperious need which drives forth the surplus population of Great Britain and Germany. Nevertheless, so far as governmental energy and organising skill can make colonies successful, the French possessions in West Africa, Indo-China, Madagascar, and the Pacific have certainly justified their existence.<sup>1</sup> No longer do we hear the old

<sup>1</sup> *The Geographical Journal*, January 1, 1904, pp. 5, 18, 27.

joke that a French colonial settlement consists of a dozen officials, a *restaurateur*, and a hair-dresser.<sup>1</sup>

In the seventies the French Republic took up once more the work of colonial expansion in West Africa, in which the Emperor Napoleon III. had taken great interest. The Governor of Senegal, M. Faidherbe, pushed on expeditions from that colony to the head waters of the Niger in the years 1879-81. There the French came into collision with a powerful slave-raiding chief, Samory, whom they worsted in a series of campaigns in the five years following. Events therefore promised to fulfil the desires of Gambetta, who during his brief term of office in 1881 initiated plans for the construction of a trans-Saharan railway (never completed) and the establishment of two powerful French companies on the upper Niger. French energy secured for the Republic the very lands which the great traveller Mungo Park first revealed to the gaze of civilised peoples. It is worthy of note that in the year 1865 the House of Commons, when urged to promote British trade and influence on that mighty river, passed a resolution declaring that any extension of British rule in that quarter was inexpedient. So rapid, however, was the progress of the French arms on the Niger, and in the country behind British Gold Coast settlements, that private individuals in London and Liverpool began to take action. Already in 1878 the

<sup>1</sup> See *La Colonisation chez les Peuples modernes*, by Paul Leroy-Beaulieu; *Discours et Opinions*, by Jules Ferry; *La France coloniale* (6th edit., 1893), by Alfred Rambaud; *La Colonisation de l'Indo-Chine* (1902), by Chailley-Bert; *L'Indo-Chine française* (1905), by Paul Doumer (describing its progress under his administration); *Notre Épopée coloniale* (1901), by P. Legendre; *La Mise en Valeur de notre Domaine coloniale* (1903), by C. Guy; *Un Siècle d'Expansion coloniale* (1900), by M. Dubois and A. Terrier; *Le Partage de l'Afrique* (1898), by V. Deville.

British firms trading with the lower Niger had formed the United African Company, with the results noted above. A British Protectorate was also established in the year 1884 over the coast districts around Lagos, "with the view of guarding their interests against the advance of the French and Germans." <sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the French were making rapid progress under the lead of Gallieni and Archinard. In 1890 the latter conquered Segu-Sikoro, and a year later Bissandugu. A far greater prize fell to the tricolour at the close of 1893. Boiteux and Bonnier succeeded in leading a flotilla and a column to the mysterious city of Timbuctu; but a little later a French force sustained a serious check from the neighbouring tribes. The affair only spurred on the Republic to still greater efforts, which led finally to the rout of Samory's forces and his capture in the year 1898. That redoubtable chief, who had defied France for fifteen years, was sent as a prisoner to Gaboon.

These campaigns and other more peaceful "missions" added to the French possessions a vast territory of some 800,000 square kilometres in the basin of the Niger. Meanwhile disputes had occurred with the King of Dahomey, which led to the utter overthrow of his power by Colonel Dodds in a brilliant little campaign in 1892. The crowned slave-raider was captured and sent to Martinique.

These rapid conquests, especially those on the Niger, brought France and England more than once to the verge of war. In the autumn of the year 1897, the aggressions

<sup>1</sup> For its progress see Colonial Reports, Niger Coast Protectorate, for 1898-99. For the Franco-German agreement of December 24, 1885, delimiting their West African lands, see Banning, *Le Partage politique de l'Afrique*, pp. 22-26. For the Anglo-French agreement of August 10, 1889, see Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 3, (1890).

of the French at and near Busa, on the right bank of the lower Niger, led to a most serious situation. Despite its inclusion in the domains of the Royal Niger Company, that town was occupied by French troops. At the Guildhall banquet (November 9th), Lord Salisbury made the firm but really prudent declaration that the Government would brook no interference with the treaty rights of a British company. The pronouncement was timely; for French action at Busa, taken in conjunction with the Marchand expedition from the Niger basin to the upper Nile at Fashoda (see Vol. II., Chapter VI.), seemed to betoken a deliberate defiance of the United Kingdom. Ultimately, however, the tricolour was withdrawn from situations that were legally untenable. These questions were settled by the Anglo-French agreement of 1898, which, we may add, cleared the ground for the still more important compact of 1904.

The limits of this chapter having already been passed, it is impossible to advert to the parts played by Italy and Portugal in the partition of Africa. At best they have been subsidiary; the colonial efforts of Italy in the Red Sea and in Somaliland have as yet produced little else than disaster and disappointment. But for the part played by Serpa Pinto in the Zambesi basin, the rôle of Portugal has been one of quiescence. Some authorities, as will appear in the following chapter, would describe it by a less euphonious term; it is now known that slave-hunting goes on in the upper part of the Zambesi basin owned by them. The French settlement at Obock, opposite Perim, and the partition of Somaliland between England and Italy, can also only be named.

The general results of the partition of Africa may best be realised by studying the map at the close of this volume, and by the following statistics as presented by Mr. Scott Keltie in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*:

	SQUARE MILES.
French territories in Africa (inclusive of the Sahara) . . . . .	3,804,974
British (inclusive of the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies, but exclusive of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan—610,000 square miles) . . . . .	2,713,910
German . . . . .	933,380
Congo Free State . . . . .	900,000
Portuguese . . . . .	790,124
Italian . . . . .	188,500

These results correspond in the main to the foresight and energy displayed by the several States, and to the initial advantages which they enjoyed on the coast of Africa. The methods employed by France and Germany present a happy union of individual initiative with intelligent and persistent direction by the State; for it must be remembered that up to the year 1880 the former possessed few good bases of operation, and the latter none whatever. The natural portals of Africa were in the hands of Great Britain and Portugal. It is difficult to say what would have been the present state of Africa if everything had depended on the officials at Downing Street and Whitehall. Certainly the expansion of British influence in that continent (apart from the Nile valley) would have been insignificant but for the exertions of private individuals. Among them the names of Joseph Thomson, Sir William Mackinnon, Sir John Kirk, Sir Harry Johnston, Sir George Goldie, Sir

Frederick Lugard, John Mackenzie, and Cecil Rhodes will be remembered as those of veritable empire-builders.

Viewing the matter from the European standpoint, the partition of Africa may be regarded as a triumph for the cause of peace. In the years 1880-1900, France, Germany, Great Britain, Portugal, Italy, and Belgium came into possession of new lands far larger than those for which French and British fleets and armies had fought so desperately in the eighteenth century. If we go further back and think of the wars waged for the possession of the barrier towns of Flanders, the contrast between the fruitless strifes of that age and the peaceful settlement of the affairs of a mighty continent will appear still more striking. It is true, of course, that the cutting up of the lands of natives by white men is as indefensible morally as it is inevitable in the eager expansiveness of the present age. Further, it may be admitted that the methods adopted towards the aborigines have sometimes been disgraceful. But even so, the events of the years 1880-1900, black as some of them are, compare favourably with those of the long ages when the term "African trade" was merely a euphemism for slave-hunting.

NOTE.—The Parliamentary Papers on *Angra Pequena* (1884) show that the dispute with Germany was largely due to the desire of Lord Derby to see whether the Government of Cape Colony would bear the cost of administration of that whole coast, if it were annexed. Owing to a change of Ministry at Cape Town early in 1884, the affirmative reply was very long in coming; and meanwhile Germany took decisive action, as described on p. 249.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CONGO FREE STATE

“The object which unites us here to-day is one of those which deserve in the highest degree to occupy the friends of humanity. To open to civilisation the only part of our globe where it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness which envelops entire populations, is, I venture to say, a crusade worthy of this century of progress.”—KING LEOPOLD II., *Speech to the Geographical Congress of 1876 at Brussels.*

THE Congo Free State owes its origin, first, to the self-denying pioneer-work of Livingstone; second, to the energy of the late Sir H. M. Stanley in clearing up the problems of African exploration which that devoted missionary had not fully solved, and third, to the interest which His Majesty, Leopold II., King of the Belgians, has always taken in the opening up of that continent. It will be well briefly to note the chief facts which helped to fasten the gaze of Europe on the Congo basin; for these events had a practical issue; they served to bring King Leopold and Mr. Stanley into close touch with a view to the establishment of a settled government in the heart of Africa.

In 1874 Mr. H. M. Stanley (he was not knighted until the year 1899) received a commission from the proprietors of the *Daily Telegraph* to proceed to Central Africa in order to complete the geographical discoveries which had been cut short by the lamented death of Livingstone near Lake

Bangweolo. That prince of explorers had not fully solved the riddle of the waterways of Central Africa. He had found what were really the head waters of the Congo at and near Lake Moero; and had even struck the mighty river itself as far down as Nyangwe; but he could not prove that these great streams formed the upper waters of the Congo.

Stanley's journey in 1874-1877 led to many important discoveries. He first made clear the shape and extent of Victoria Nyanza; he tracked the chief feeder of that vast reservoir; and he proved that Lake Tanganyika drained into the river Congo. Voyaging down its course to the mouth, he found great and fertile territories, thus proving what Livingstone could only surmise, that here was the natural waterway into the heart of "the Dark Continent."

Up to the year 1877 nearly all the pioneer work in the interior of the Congo basin was the outcome of Anglo-American enterprise. Therefore, so far as priority of discovery confers a claim to possession, that claim belonged to the English-speaking peoples. King Leopold recognised the fact and allowed a certain space of time for British merchants to enter on the possession of what was potentially their natural "sphere of influence." Stanley, however, failed to convince his countrymen of the feasibility of opening up that vast district to peaceful commerce. At that time they were suffering from severe depression in trade and agriculture, and from the disputes resulting from the Eastern Question both in the near East and in Afghanistan. For the time "the weary Titan" was preoccupied and could not turn his thoughts to commercial expansion, which would speedily have cured his evils. Consequently, in November, 1878, Stanley proceeded to



Brussels in order to present to King Leopold the opportunity which England let slip.

Already the King of the Belgians had succeeded in arousing widespread interest in the exploration of Africa. In the autumn of 1876 he convened a meeting of leading explorers and geographers of the six Great Powers and of Belgium for the discussion of questions connected with the opening up of that continent; but at that time, and until the results of Stanley's journey were made known, the King and his coadjutors turned their gaze almost exclusively on East Africa. It is therefore scarcely appropriate for one of the Belgian panegyrists of the King to proclaim that when Central Africa celebrates its Day of Thanksgiving for the countless blessings of civilisation conferred by that monarch, it will look back on the day of meeting of that Conference (September 12, 1876) as the dawn of the new era of goodwill and prosperity.<sup>1</sup> King Leopold, in opening the Conference, made use of the inspiring words quoted at the head of this chapter, and asked the delegates to discuss the means to be adopted for "planting definitely the standard of civilisation on the soil of Central Africa."

As a result of the Conference, "The International Association for the Exploration and Civilisation of Africa" was founded. It had committees in most of the capitals of Europe, but the energy of King Leopold, and the sums which he and his people advanced for the pioneer work of the Association, early gave to that of Brussels a priority, of which good use was made in the sequel.<sup>2</sup> The Great Powers were at this time distracted by the Russo-Turkish

<sup>1</sup> *L'Afrique nouvelle*. Par E. Descamps, Brussels, Paris, 1903, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> For details see J. de C. Macdonell, *King Leopold II*, p. 113.

war and by the acute international crisis that supervened. Thus the jealousies and weakness of the Great Powers left the field free for Belgian activities, which, owing to the energy of a British explorer, were definitely concentrated upon the exploitation of the Congo.

On November 25, 1878, a separate committee of the International Association was formed at Brussels with the name of "Comité d'Études du Haut Congo." In the year 1879 it took the title of the "International Association of the Congo," and for all practical purposes superseded its progenitor. Outwardly, however, the Association was still international. Stanley became its chief agent on the river Congo, and in the years 1879-1880 made numerous treaties with local chiefs. In February, 1880, he founded the first station of the Association at Vivi, and within four years established twenty-four stations on the main river and its chief tributaries. The cost of these explorations was largely borne by King Leopold.

The King also commissioned Lieutenant von Wissmann to complete his former work of discovery in the great district watered by the river Kasai and its affluents; and in and after 1886 he and his coadjutor, Dr. Wolf, greatly extended the knowledge of the southern and central parts of the Congo basin.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime the British missionaries, Rev. W. H. Bentley and Rev. G. Grenfell, carried on explorations, especially on the Ubangi River, and in the lands between it and the Congo. The part which missionaries have taken in the work of discovery and pacification entitles them to a high place in the records of equatorial exploration; and their influence has often been exerted

<sup>1</sup> H. von Wissmann, *My Second Journey through Equatorial Africa*, 1891. Rev. W. H. Bentley, *Pioneering on the Congo*, 2 vols.

beneficially on behalf of the natives. We may add here that M. de Brazza did good work for the French tricolour in exploring the land north of the Congo and Ubangi rivers; he founded several stations, which were to develop into the great French Congo colony.

Meanwhile events had transpired in Europe which served to give stability to these undertakings. The energy thrown into the exploration of the Congo basin soon awakened the jealousy of the Power which had long ago discovered the mouth of the great river and its adjacent coasts. In the years 1883, 1884, Portugal put forward a claim to the over-lordship of those districts on the ground of priority of discovery and settlement. On all sides that claim was felt to be unreasonable. The occupation of that territory by the Portuguese had been short-lived, and nearly all traces of it had disappeared, except at Kabinda and one or two points on the coast. The fact that Diogo Cam and others had discovered the mouth of the Congo in the fifteenth century was a poor argument for closing to other peoples, three centuries later, the whole of the vast territory between that river and the mouth of the Zambesi. These claims raised the problem of the *hinterland*, that is, the ownership of the whole range of territory behind a coast line. Furthermore, the Portuguese officials were notoriously inefficient and generally corrupt; while the customs system of that State was such as to fetter the activities of trade with shackles of a truly mediæval type.

Over against these musty claims of Portugal there stood the offers of "The International Association of the Congo" to bring the blessings of free trade and civilisation to down-trodden millions of negroes, if only access were granted from the sea. The contrast between the dull obscurantism

of Lisbon and the benevolent intentions of Brussels struck the popular imagination. At that time the eye of faith discerned in the King of the Belgians the ideal godfather of a noble undertaking, and great was the indignation when Portugal interfered with freedom of access to the sea at the mouth of the Congo. Various matters were also in dispute between Portugal and Great Britain respecting trading rights at that important outlet; and they were by no means settled by an Anglo-Portuguese Convention of February 26th (1884), in which Lord Granville, Foreign Minister in the Gladstone Cabinet, was thought to display too much deference to questionable claims. Protests were urged against this Convention, by the United States, France, and Germany, with the result that the Lisbon Government proposed to refer all these matters to a Conference of the Powers; and arrangements were soon made for the summoning of their representatives to Berlin, under the presidency of Prince Bismarck.

Before the Conference met, the United States took the decisive step of recognising the rights of the Association to the government of that river-basin (April 10, 1884)—a proceeding which ought to have secured to the United States an abiding influence on the affairs of the State which they did so much to create. The example set by the United States was soon followed by the other Powers. In that same month France withdrew the objections which she had raised to the work of the Association, and came to terms with it in a treaty whereby she gained priority in the right of purchase of its claims and possessions. The way having been thus cleared, the Berlin Conference met on November 15, 1884. Prince Bismarck suggested that the three chief topics for consideration were (1) the free-

dom of navigation and of trade in the Congo area; (2) freedom of navigation on the river Niger; (3) the formalities to be thenceforth observed in lawful and valid annexations of territories in Africa. The British plenipotentiary, Sir Edward Malet, however, pointed out that, while his Government wished to preserve freedom of navigation and of trade upon the Niger, it would object to the formation of any international commission for those purposes, seeing that Great Britain was the sole proprietary Power on the lower Niger (see Vol. II., Chapter VII.).<sup>1</sup> This firm declaration possibly prevented the intrusion of claims which might have led to the whittling down of British rights on that great river. An Anglo-French Commission was afterward appointed to supervise the navigation of the Niger.

The main question being thus concentrated on the Congo, Portugal was obliged to defer to the practically unanimous refusal of the Powers to recognise her claims over the lower parts of that river; and on November 19th she conceded the principle of freedom of trade on those waters. Next, it was decided that the Congo Association should acquire and hold governing rights over nearly the whole of the vast expanse drained by the Congo, with some reservations in favour of France on the north and Portugal on the south. The extension of the principle of freedom of trade nearly to the Indian Ocean was likewise affirmed; and the establishment of monopolies or privileges "of any kind" was distinctly forbidden within the Congo area.

An effort strictly to control the sale of intoxicating liquors to natives lapsed owing to the strong opposition of Germany and Holland, though a weaker motion on the same all-important matter found acceptance (December

<sup>1</sup> See Protocols, Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 4 (1885), pp. 119 *et seq.*

22d). On January 7, 1885, the Conference passed a stringent declaration against the slave-trade: ". . . these regions shall not be used as markets or routes of transit for the trade in slaves, no matter of what race. Each of these Powers binds itself to use all the means at its disposal to put an end to this trade, and to punish those engaged in it."

The month of February saw the settlement of the boundary claims with France and Portugal, on bases nearly the same as those still existing. The Congo Association gained the northern bank of the river at its mouth, but ceded to Portugal a small strip of coast line a little farther north around Kabinda. These arrangements were, on the whole, satisfactory to the three parties. France now definitively gained by treaty right her vast Congo territory of some 257,000 square miles in area, while Portugal retained on the south of the river a coast nearly 1000 miles in length and a dominion estimated at 351,000 square miles. The Association, though handing over to these Powers respectively 60,000 and 45,000 square miles of land which its pioneers hoped to obtain, nevertheless secured for itself an immense territory of some 870,000 square miles.

The General Act of the Berlin Conference was signed on February 26, 1885. Its terms and those of the Protocols prove conclusively that the governing powers assigned to the Congo Association were assigned to a neutral and international State, responsible to the Powers which gave it its existence. In particular, Articles IV. and V. of the General Act ran as follows:

"Merchandise imported into these regions shall remain free from import and transit dues. The Powers reserve to

themselves to determine, after the lapse of twenty years, whether this freedom of import shall be retained or not.

“No Power which exercises, or shall exercise, sovereign rights in the above mentioned regions shall be allowed to grant therein a monopoly or favour of any kind in matters of trade. Foreigners, without distinction, shall enjoy protection of their persons and property, as well as the right of acquiring and transferring movable and immovable possessions, and national rights and treatment in the exercise of their professions.”

Before describing the growth of the Congo State, it is needful to refer to two preliminary considerations. First, it should be noted that the Berlin Conference committed the mistake of failing to devise any means for securing the observance of the principles there laid down. Its work, considered in the abstract, was excellent. The mere fact that representatives of the Powers could meet amicably to discuss and settle the administration of a great territory which in other ages would have provoked them to deadly strifes, was in itself a most hopeful augury, and possibly the success of the Conference inspired a too confident belief in the effective watchfulness of the Powers over the welfare of the young State to which they then stood as godfathers. In any case it must be confessed that they have since interpreted their duties in the easy way to which godfathers are all too prone. As in the case of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, so in that of the Conference of Berlin of 1885, the fault lay not in the promise but in the failure of the executors to carry out the terms of the promise.

Another matter remains to be noted. It resulted from the demands urged by Portugal in 1883-84. By way of retort, the plenipotentiaries now declared any occupation

of territory to be valid only when it had effectively taken place and had been notified to all the Powers represented at the Conference. It also defined a "sphere of influence" as the area within which one Power is recognised as possessing priority of claims over other States. The doctrine was to prove convenient for expansive States in the future.

The first important event in the life of the new State was the assumption by King Leopold II. of sovereign powers. All nations, and Belgium not the least, were startled by his announcement to his Ministers, on April 16, 1885, that he desired the assent of the Belgian Parliament to this proceeding. He stated that the union between Belgium and the Congo State would be merely personal, and that the latter would enjoy, like the former, the benefits of neutrality. The Parliament on April 28th gave its assent, with but one dissentient voice, on the understanding stated above. The Powers also signified their approval. On August 1st, King Leopold informed them of the facts just stated, and announced that the new State took the title of the Congo Free State (*L'État Indépendant du Congo*).<sup>1</sup>

Questions soon arose concerning the delimitation of the boundary with the French Congo territory; and these led to the signing of a protocol at Brussels on April 29, 1887, whereby the Congo Free State gave up certain of its claims in the northern part of the Congo region (the right bank of the Ubangi River), but exacted in return the addition of a statement "that the right of pre-emption accorded to France could not be claimed as against Belgium, of which King Leopold is sovereign."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of the Congo Free State*, by H. W. Wack (New York, 1905), p. 101. Wauters, *L'État Indépendant du Congo*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> *The Congo State*, by D. C. Boulger (London, 1896), p. 62.



There seems, however, to be some question whether this clause is likely to have any practical effect. The clause is obviously inoperative if Belgium ultimately declines to take over the Congo territory, and there is at least the chance that this will happen. If it does happen, King Leopold and the Belgian Parliament recognise the prior claim of France to all the Congolese territory. The King and the Congo Ministers seem to have made use of this circumstance so as to strengthen the financial relations of France to their new State in several ways, notably in the formation of monopolist groups for the exploitation of Congoland. For the present we may remark that by a clause of the Franco-Belgian Treaty of February 5, 1895, the Government of Brussels declared that it "recognises the right of preference possessed by France over its Congolese possessions, in case of their compulsory alienation, in whole or in part."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile King Leopold proceeded as if he were the absolute ruler of the new State. He bestowed on it a constitution on the most autocratic basis. M. Cattier, in his account of that constitution sums it up by stating that

"The sovereign is the direct source of legislative, executive, and judiciary powers. He can, if he chooses, delegate their exercise to certain functionaries, but this delegation has no other source than his will. . . . He can issue rules, on which, so long as they last, is based the validity of certain acts by himself or by his delegates. But he can cancel these rules whenever they appear to him troublesome, useless, or dangerous. The organisation of

<sup>1</sup> Cattier, *Droit et Administration de l'État Indépendent du Congo*, p. 82.

justice, the composition of the army, financial systems, and industrial and commercial institutions—all are established solely by him in accordance with his just or faulty conceptions as to their usefulness or efficiency.”<sup>1</sup>

A natural outcome of such a line of policy was the gradual elimination of non-Belgian officials. In July, 1886, Sir Francis de Winton, Stanley's successor in the administration of the Congo area, gave place to a Belgian “Governor-General,” M. Janssen; and similar changes were made in all grades of the service.

Meanwhile other events were occurring which enabled the officials of the Congo State greatly to modify the provisions laid down at the Berlin Conference. These events were as follows: For many years the Arab slave-traders had been extending their raids in easterly and south-easterly directions, until they began to desolate the parts of the Congo State nearest to the great lakes and the Bahr-el-Ghazal.

Their activity may be ascribed to the following causes. The slave trade has for generations been pursued in Africa. The negro tribes themselves have long practised it; and the Arabs, in their gradual conquest of many districts of Central Africa, found it to be by far the most profitable of all pursuits. The market was almost boundless; for since the Congress of Vienna (1815) and the Congress of Verona (1822) the Christian Powers had forbidden their subjects any longer to pursue that nefarious calling. It is true that kidnapping of negroes went on secretly, despite all the efforts of British cruisers to capture the slavers. It is said that the last seizure of a Portuguese schooner illicitly trading in human flesh was made off the Congo coast as late as

<sup>1</sup> Cattier, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.

the year 1868.<sup>1</sup> But the cessation of the trans-Atlantic slave-trade only served to stimulate the Arab man-hunters of Eastern Africa to greater efforts; and the rise of Mahdism quickened the demand for slaves in an unprecedented manner. Thus, the hateful trade went on apace, threatening to devastate the continent which explorers, missionaries, and traders were opening up.

The civilising and the devastating processes were certain soon to clash; and, as Stanley had foreseen, the conflict broke out on the upper Congo. There the slave-raiders, subsidised or led by Arabs of Zanzibar, were specially active. Working from Ujiji and other bases, they attacked some of the expeditions sent by the Congo Free State. Chief among the raiders was a half-caste Arab negro nick-named Tipu Tib ("the gatherer of wealth"), who by his energy and cunning had become practically the master of a great district between the Congo and Lake Tanganyika. At first (1887-1888) the Congo Free State adopted Stanley's suggestion of appointing Tipu Tib to be its governor of the Stanley Falls district, at a salary of thirty pounds a month.<sup>2</sup> So artificial an arrangement soon broke down, and war broke out early in 1892. The forces of the Congo Free State, led by Commandants Dhanis and Lothaire, and by Captain S. L. Hinde, finally worsted the Arabs after two long and wearisome campaigns waged on the upper Congo. Into the details of the war it is impossible to enter. The accounts of all the operations, including that of Captain Hinde,<sup>3</sup> are written

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Wauters, *L'État Indépendant du Congo*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley, *In Darkest Africa*, i., pp. 60-70.

<sup>3</sup> *The Fall of the Congo Arabs*, by Capt. S. L. Hinde (London, 1897).

with a certain reserve; and the impression that the writers were working on behalf of civilisation and humanity is somewhat blurred by the startling admissions made by Captain Hinde in a paper read by him before the Royal Geographical Society in London, on March 11, 1895. He there stated that the Arabs, "despite their slave-raiding propensities," had "converted the Manyema and Malela country into one of the most prosperous in Central Africa." He also confessed that during the fighting the two flourishing towns, Nyangwe and Kasongo, had been wholly swept away. In view of these statements the results of the campaign cannot be regarded with unmixed satisfaction.

Such, however, was not the view taken at the time. Not long before, the Continent had rung with the sermons and speeches of Cardinal Lavigerie, Bishop of Algiers, who, like a second Peter the Hermit, called all Christians to unite in a great crusade for the extirpation of slavery. The outcome of it all was the meeting of an Anti-Slavery Conference at Brussels, at the close of 1889, in which the Powers that had framed the Berlin Act again took part. The second article passed at Brussels asserted among other things the duties of the Powers "in giving aid to commercial enterprises to watch over their legality, controlling especially the contracts for service entered into with natives." The abuses in the trade in firearms were to be carefully checked and controlled.

Towards the close of the Conference a proposal was brought forward (May 10, 1890) to the effect that, as the suppression of the slave trade and the work of upraising the natives would entail great expense, it was desirable to annul the clause in the Berlin Act prohibiting the imposition of import duties for, at least, twenty years from that

date (that is, up to the year 1905). The proposal seemed so plausible as to disarm the opposition of all the Powers, except Holland, which strongly protested against the change. Lord Salisbury's Government neglected to safeguard British interests in this matter; and, despite the unremitting opposition of the Dutch Government, the obnoxious change was finally registered on January 2, 1892, it being understood that the duties were not to exceed 10 per cent. *ad valorem* except in the case of spirituous liquors, and that no differential treatment would be accorded to the imports of any nation or nations.

Thus the European Powers, yielding to the specious plea that they must grant the Congo Free State the power of levying customs dues in order to further its philanthropic aims, gave up one of the fundamentals agreed on at the Berlin Conference. The *raison d'être* of the Congo Free State was, that it stood for freedom of trade in that great area; and to sign away one of the birthrights of modern civilisation, owing to the plea of a temporary want of cash in Congoland, can only be described as the act of a political Esau. The General Act of the Brussels Conference received a provisional sanction (the clause respecting customs dues not yet being definitely settled) on July 2, 1890.<sup>1</sup>

On the next day the Congo Free State entered into a financial arrangement with the Belgian Government which marked one more step in the reversal of the policy agreed on at Berlin five years previously. In this connection we must note that King Leopold by his will, dated August 2,

<sup>1</sup> On August 1, 1890, the Sultan of Zanzibar declared that no sale of slaves should thenceforth take place in his dominions. He also granted to slaves the right of appeal to him in case they were cruelly treated. See Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 1 (1890-91).

1889, bequeathed to Belgium after his death all his sovereign rights over that State, "together with all the benefits, rights and advantages appertaining to that sovereignty." Apparently, the occasion that called forth the will was the urgent need of a loan of ten million francs which the Congo State pressed the Belgian Government to make on behalf of the Congo railway. Thus, on the very eve of the summoning of the European Conference at Brussels, the Congo Government (that is, King Leopold) had appealed, not to the Great Powers, but to the Belgian Government, and had sought to facilitate the grant of the desired loan by the prospect of the ultimate transfer of his sovereign rights to Belgium.

Unquestionably the King had acted very generously in the past toward the Congo Association and State. It has even been affirmed that his loans often amounted to the sum of forty million francs a year; but, even so, that did not confer the right to will away to any one state the results of an international enterprise. As a matter of fact, however, the Congo State was at that time nearly bankrupt; and in this circumstance, doubtless, may be found an explanation of the apathy of the Powers in presence of an infraction of the terms of the Berlin Act of 1885.

We are now in a position to understand more clearly the meaning of the Convention of July 3, 1890, between the Congo Free State and the Belgian Government. By its terms the latter pledged itself to advance a loan of twenty-five million francs to the Congo State in the course of ten years, without interest, on condition that at the close of six months after the expiration of that time Belgium should have the right of annexing the Free State with all its possessions and liabilities.

Into the heated discussions which took place in the Belgian Parliament in the spring and summer of 1901 respecting the Convention of July 3, 1890, we cannot enter. The King interfered so as to prevent the acceptance of a reasonable compromise proposed by the Belgian Prime Minister, M. Beernaert; and ultimately matters were arranged by a decree of August 7, 1901, which will probably lead to the transference of King Leopold's sovereign rights to Belgium at his death. In the meantime, the entire executive and legislative control is vested in him, and in a colonial Minister and council of four members, who are responsible solely to him, though the Minister has a seat in the Belgian Parliament.<sup>1</sup> To King Leopold, therefore, belongs the ultimate responsibility for all that is done in the Congo Free State. As M. Cattier phrased it in the year 1898: 'Belgium has no more right to intervene in the internal affairs of the Congo than the Congo State has to intervene in Belgian affairs. As regards the Congo Government, Belgium has no right either of intervention, direction, or control.'<sup>2</sup>

Very many Belgians object strongly to the building up of an *imperium in imperio* in their land; and the wealth which the ivory and rubber of the Congo brings into their midst (not to speak of the stock-jobbing and company-promoting which go on at Brussels and Antwerp), does not blind them to the moral responsibility which the Belgian people has indirectly incurred. It is true that Belgium has no legal responsibility, but the State which has lent a large sum to the Congo Government, besides providing the great majority of the officials and exploiters of that

<sup>1</sup> H. R. Fox-Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> M. Cattier, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

territory, cannot escape some amount of responsibility. M. Vandervelde, leader of the Labour Party in Belgium, has boldly and persistently asserted the right of the Belgian people to a share in the control of its eventual inheritance, but hitherto all the efforts of his colleagues have failed before the groups of capitalists who have acquired great monopolist rights in Congoland.

Having now traced the steps by which the Congolese Government reached its present anomalous position, we will proceed to give a short account of its material progress and administration.

No one can deny that much has been done in the way of engineering. A light railway has been constructed from near Vivi on the lower Congo to Stanley Pool, another from Boma into the districts north of that important river port. Others have been planned, or are already being constructed, between Stanley Falls and the northern end of Lake Tanganyika, with a branch to the Albert Nyanza. Another line will connect the upper part of the Congo River with the westernmost affluent of the Kasai River, thus taking the base of the arc instead of the immense curve of the main stream. By the year 1903, 480 kilometres of railway were open for traffic, while 1600 more were in course of construction or were being planned. It seems that the first 400 kilometres, in the hilly region near the seaboard, cost 75,000,000 francs in place of the 25,000,000 francs first estimated.<sup>1</sup> Road-making has also been pushed on in many directions. A flotilla of steamers plies on the great river and its chief affluents. In 1885 there were but five; the number now exceeds a hundred. As many as

<sup>1</sup> *L'Afrique nouvelle*, by E. Descamps (1903), chap. xv. Much of the credit of the early railway-making was due to Colonel Thys.



1532 kilometres of telegraphs are now open. The exports advanced from 1,980,441 francs in 1885-86 to 50,488,394 francs in 1901-02, mainly owing to the immense trade in rubber, of which more anon; the imports from 9,175,103 francs in 1893 to 23,102,064 in 1901-02.<sup>1</sup>

Far more important is the moral gain which has resulted from the suppression of the slave trade over a large part of the State. On this point we may quote the testimony of Mr. Roger Casement, British Consul at Boma, in an official report founded on observations taken during a long tour up the Congo. He writes: "The open selling of slaves, and the canoe convoys which once navigated the upper Congo, have everywhere disappeared. No act of the Congo State Government has perhaps produced more laudable results than the vigorous suppression of this widespread evil."<sup>2</sup>

King Leopold has also striven hard to extend the bounds of the Congo State. Not satisfied with his compact with France of April, 1887, which fixed the Ubangi River and its tributaries as the boundary of their possessions, he pushed ahead to the north-east of those confines, and early in the nineties established posts at Lado on the White Nile and in Bahr-el-Ghazal basin. Clearly his aim was to conquer the districts which Egypt for the time had given up to the Mahdi. These efforts brought about sharp friction between the Congolese authorities and France and Great Britain. After long discussions the Cabinet of London agreed to the convention of May 12, 1894, whereby the Congo State gained the Bahr-el-Ghazal basin and the left bank of the upper Nile, together with a port on the Albert

<sup>1</sup> *L'Afrique nouvelle*, pp. 589-590.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 1 (1904), p. 26.

Nyanza. On his side, King Leopold recognised the claims of England to the right bank of the Nile and to a strip of land between the Albert Nyanza and Lake Tanganyika. Owing to the strong protests of France and Germany this agreement was rescinded, and the Cabinet of Paris finally compelled King Leopold to give up all claims to the Bahr-el-Ghazal, though he acquired the right to lease the Lado district below the Albert Nyanza. The importance of these questions in the development of British policy in the Nile basin has been pointed out in Chapter VI.

The ostensible aim, however, of the founders of the Congo Free State was, not the exploitation of the upper Nile district, the making of railways and the exportation of great quantities of ivory and rubber from Congoland, but the civilising and uplifting of Central Africa. The General Act of the Berlin Conference begins with an invocation to Almighty God; and the Brussels Conference imitated its predecessor in this particular. It is, therefore, as a civilising and moralising agency that the Congo Government will always be judged at the bar of posterity.

The first essential of success in dealing with backward races is sympathy with their most cherished notions. Yet from the very outset one of these was violated. On July 1, 1885, a decree of the Congo Free State asserted that all vacant lands were the property of the Government, that is, virtually of the King himself. Further, on June 30, 1887, an ordinance was decreed, claiming the right to let or sell domains, and to grant mining or wood-cutting rights on any land, "the ownership of which is not recognised as appertaining to any one." These decrees, we may remark, were for some time kept secret, until their effects became obvious.

All who know anything of the land systems of primitive peoples will see that they contravened the customs which the savage holds dear. The plots actually held and tilled by the natives are infinitesimally small when compared with the vast tracts over which their tribes claim hunting, pasturage, and other rights. The land system of the savage is everywhere communal. Individual ownership in the European sense is a comparatively late development. The Congolese authorities must have known this; for nearly all troubles with native races have arisen from the profound differences in the ideas of the European and the savage on the subject of land-holding.

Yet, in face of the experience of former times, the Congo State put forward a claim which has led, or will lead, to the confiscation of all tribal or communal land-rights in that huge area. Such confiscation may, perhaps, be defended in the case of the United States, where the newcomers enormously outnumbered the Red Indians, and tilled land that previously lay waste. It is indefensible in the tropics, where the white settlers will always remain the units as compared with the millions whom they elevate or exploit.<sup>1</sup> The savage holds strongly to certain rudimentary ideas of justice, especially to the right, which he and his tribe have always claimed and exercised, of *using* the tribal land for the primary needs of life. When he is denied the right of hunting, cutting timber, or pasturage, he feels "cribbed, cabined, and confined." This, doubtless, is the chief source of the quarrels between the new

<sup>1</sup> The number of whites in Congoland is about 1700, of whom 1060 are Belgians; the blacks number about 29,000,000, according to Stanley; the Belgian Governor-General, Wahis, thinks this below the truth. See Wauters, *L'État indépendant du Congo*, pp. 261, 432.

State and its *protégés*, also of the depression of spirits which Mr. Casement found so prevalent. The best French authorities on colonial development now admit that it is madness to interfere with the native land tenures in tropical Africa.

The method used in the enlisting of men for public works and for the army has also caused many troubles. This question is admittedly one of great difficulty. Hard work must be done, and, in the tropics, the white man can only direct it. Besides, where life is fairly easy, men will not readily come forward to labour. Either the inducement offered must be adequate, or some form of compulsory enlistment must be adopted. The Belgian officials, in the plentiful lack of funds that has always clogged their State, have tried compulsion, generally through the native chiefs. These are induced, by the offer of cotton cloth or bright-coloured handkerchiefs, to supply men from the tribe. If the labourers are not forthcoming, the chief is punished, his village being sometimes burned. By means, then, of gaudy handkerchiefs, or firebrands, the labourers are obtained. They figure as "apprentices," under the law of November 8, 1888, which accorded "special protection to the blacks."

The British Consul, Mr. Casement, in his report on the administration of the Congo, stated that the majority of the government workmen at Léopoldville were under some form of compulsion, but were, on the whole, well cared for.<sup>1</sup>

According to a German resident in Congoland, the lot of the apprentices differs little from that of slaves. Their position, as contrasted with that of their former relation

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 1 (1904), p. 27.

to the chief, is humorously defined by the term *libérés*.<sup>1</sup> The hardships of the labourers on the State railways were such that the British Government refused to allow them to be recruited from Sierra Leone or other British possessions.

However, now that a British Cabinet has allowed a great colony to make use of indentured yellow labour in its mines, Great Britain cannot, without glaring inconsistency, lodge any protest against the infringement, in Congoland, of the Act of the Berlin Conference in the matter of the treatment of hired labourers. If the lot of the Congolese apprentices is to be bettered, the initiative must be taken at some capital other than London.

Another subject which nearly concerns the welfare of the Congo State is the recruiting and use of native troops. These are often raised from the most barbarous tribes of the far interior; their pay is very small; and too often the main inducement to serve under the blue banner with the golden star, is the facility for feasting and plunder at the expense of other natives who have not satisfied the authorities. As one of them naïvely said to Mr. Casement, *he preferred to be with the hunters rather than with the hunted*.

It seems that grave abuses first crept in during the course of the campaign for the extirpation of slavery and slave-raiding in the Stanley Falls region. The Arab slave-raiders were rich, not only in slaves, but in ivory—prizes which tempted the cupidity of the native troops, and even, it is said, of their European officers. In any case, it is certain that the liberating forces, hastily raised and imperfectly controlled, perpetrated shocking outrages on the

<sup>1</sup> A. Boshart, *Zehn Jahre Afrikanischen Lebens* (1898), quoted by Fox-Bourne, *op. cit.*, p. 77. For further details see the article by Mr. Glave, once an official of the Congo Free State, in the *Century Magazine*, liii.; also his work, *Six Years in the Congo* (1892).

tribes for whose sake they were waging war. The late Mr. Glave, in the article in the *Century Magazine* referred to above, found reason for doubting whether the crusade did not work almost as much harm as the evils it was sent to cure. His words were these: "The black soldiers are bent on fighting and raiding; they want no peaceful settlement. They have good rifles and ammunition, realise their superiority over the natives with their bows and arrows, and they want to shoot and kill and rob. Black delights to kill black, whether the victim be man, woman, or child, and no matter how defenceless." This deep-seated habit of mind is hard to eradicate; and among certain of the less reputable of the Belgian officers it has occasionally been used in order to terrorise into obedience tribes that kicked against the decrees of the Congo State.

Undoubtedly there is great difficulty in avoiding friction with native tribes. All governments have at certain times and places behaved more or less culpably towards them. British annals have been fouled by many a misdeed on the part of harsh officials and grasping pioneers, while recent revelations as to the treatment of natives in Western Australia show the need of close supervision of officials even in a popularly governed colony. The record of German East Africa and the French Congo is also very far from clean. Still, in the opinion of all who have watched over the welfare of the aborigines—among whom we may name Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Fox-Bourne—the treatment of the natives in a large part of the Congo Free State has been worse than in the districts named above.<sup>1</sup> There is also the further damning fact that the very State

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Dilke stated this very forcibly in a speech delivered at the Holborn Town Hall on June 7, 1905.

which claimed to be a great philanthropic agency has, until very recently, refused to institute any full inquiry into the alleged defects of its administration.

Some of these defects may be traced to the bad system of payment of officials. Not only are they underpaid, but they have no pension such as is given by the British, French, and Dutch governments to their employees. The result is that the Congolese officer looks on his term of service in that unhealthy climate as a time when he must enrich himself for life. Students of Roman history know that, when this feeling becomes a tradition, it is apt to lead to grave abuses, the recital of which adds an undying interest to the speech of Cicero against Verres. In the case of the Congolese administrators the State provided (doubtless unwittingly) an incentive to harshness. It frequently supplemented its inadequate stipends by "gratifications," which are thus described and criticised by M. Cattier: "The custom was introduced of paying to officials prizes proportioned to the amount of produce of the 'private domain' of the State, and of the taxes paid by the natives. That amounted to the inciting, by the spur of personal interest, of officials to severity and to rigour in the application of laws and regulations." Truly, a more pernicious application of the plan of "payment by results" cannot be conceived; and M. Cattier affirms that, though nominally abolished, it existed in reality down to the year 1898.

Added to this are defects arising from the uncertainty of employment. An official may be discharged at once by the Governor-General on the ground of unfitness for service in Africa; and the man, when discharged, has no means of gaining redress. The natural result is the

growth of a habit of almost slavish obedience to the authorities, not only in regard to the written law, but also to private and semi-official intimations.<sup>1</sup>

Another blot on the record of the Congo Free State is the exclusive character of the trading corporation to which it has granted concessions. Despite the promises made to private firms that early sought to open up business in its land, the government itself has become a great trading corporation, with monopolist rights which close great regions to private traders and subject the natives to vexatious burdens. This system took definite form in September, 1891, when the government claimed exclusive rights in trade in the extreme north and north-east. At the close of that year Captain Baert, the administrator of these districts, also enjoined the collection of rubber and other products by the natives for the benefit of the State.

The next step was to forbid to private traders in that quarter the right of buying these products from natives. In May, 1892, the State monopoly in rubber, etc., was extended to the "Equator" district, natives not being allowed to sell them to any one but a State official. Many of the merchants protested, but in vain. The chief result of their protest was the establishment of privileged companies, the "Société Anversoise" and the "Anglo-Belgian," and the reservation to the State of large areas under the title of *Domaines privés* (October, 1892).<sup>2</sup> The apologetic skill of the partisans of the Congo State is very great; but it will hardly be equal to the task of proving that this new departure is not a direct violation of Article

<sup>1</sup> Cattier, *Droit et Administration . . . du Congo*, pp. 243-245.

<sup>2</sup> For a map of the domains now appropriated by these and other privileged "Trusts," see Morel, *op. cit.*, p. 466.



V. of the General Act of the Berlin Conference of 1885, quoted above.

A strange commentary on the latter part of that article, according full protection to all foreigners, was furnished by the execution of the ex-missionary, Stokes, at the hands of Belgian officials in 1895—a matter for which the Congo government finally made grudging and incomplete reparation.<sup>1</sup> Another case was as bad. In 1901 an Austrian trader, Rabinek, was arrested and imprisoned for “illegal” trading in rubber in the “Katanga Trust” country. Treated unfeelingly during his removal down the country, he succumbed to fever. His effects were seized and have not been restored to his heirs.<sup>2</sup>

When such treatment is meted out to white men who pursued their trade in reliance on the original constitution of the State, the natives may be expected to fare badly. Their misfortunes thickened when the government, on the plea that natives must contribute towards the expenses of the state, began to require them to collect and hand in a certain amount of rubber. The evidence of Mr. Casement clearly shows that the natives could not understand why this should suddenly be imposed on them; that the amount claimed was often excessive; and that the punishment meted out for failure to comply with the official demands led to many barbarous actions on the part of officials and their native troops. Thus, at Bolobo, he found large numbers of industrious workers in iron who had fled from the *Domaine de la Couronne* (King Leopold's private domain) because “they had endured such ill-treatment at the hands of the government officials

<sup>1</sup> See the evidence in Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 8 (1896).

<sup>2</sup> Morel, *op. cit.*, chaps. xxiii.-xxv.

and government soldiers in their own country that life had become intolerable, that nothing had remained for them at home but to be killed for failure to bring in a certain amount of rubber, or to die of starvation or exposure in their attempts to satisfy the demands made upon them.”<sup>1</sup>

On the north side of Lake Mantumba Mr. Casement found that the population had diminished by 60 or 70 per cent. since the imposition of the rubber tax in 1893—a fact, however, which may be partly assigned to the sleeping sickness. The tax led to constant fighting, until at last the officials gave up the effort and imposed a requisition of food or gum-copal; the change seems to have been satisfactory there and in other parts where it has been tried. In the former time the native soldiers punished delinquents with mutilation: proofs on this subject here and in several other places were indisputable. On the River Lulongo, Mr. Casement found that the amount of rubber collected from the natives generally proved to be in proportion to the number of guns used by the collecting force.<sup>2</sup> In some few cases natives were shot, even by white officers, on account of their failure to bring in the due amount of rubber.<sup>3</sup> A comparatively venial form of punishment was the capture and detention of wives until

<sup>1</sup> Parl. Papers, Africa, No. 1 (1904), pp. 29, 60. A missionary Rev. J. Whitehead, wrote in July, 1903: “During the past seven years this *domaine privé* of King Leopold has been a veritable ‘hell on earth.’” *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 43, 44, 49, 76, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70. The effort made by the Chevalier de Cuvelier to rebut Mr. Casement's charges consists mainly of an ineffective *tu quoque*. To compare the rubber tax of the Congo State with the hut-tax of Sierra Leone begs the whole question. Mr. Casement proves (p. 27) that the natives do not object to reasonable taxa-

their husbands made up the tale. Is it surprising that thousands of the natives of the north have fled into French Congoland, itself by no means free from the grip of monopolist companies, but not terrorised as are most of the tribes of the "Free State"?

Livingstone, in his day, regarded ivory as the chief cause of the slave trade in Central and Eastern Africa; but it is questionable whether even ivory (now a vanishing product) brought more woe to millions of negroes than the viscous fluid which enables the pleasure-seekers of Paris, London, and New York to rush luxuriously through space. The swift Juggernaut of the present age is accountable for as much misery as ever sugar or ivory was in the old slave days. But it seems that, so long as the motor-car industry prospers, the dumb woes of the millions of Africa will count for little in the Courts of Europe. During the session of 1904 Lord Lansdowne made praise-worthy efforts to call their attention to the misgovernment of the Congo State; but he met with no response except from the United States, Italy, and Turkey(!) A more signal proof of the weakness and cynical selfishness now prevalent

tion which comes regularly. They do object to demands for rubber which are excessive and often involve great privations. Above all the punishments utterly cow them and cause them to flee to the forests.

The efforts of Mr. Macdonnell in *King Leopold II* (London, 1905) to refute Mr. Casement also seem to me weak and inconclusive. The reply of the Congo Free State is printed by Mr. H. W. Wack in the Appendix of his *Story of the Congo Free State* (New York, 1905). It convicts Mr. Casement of inaccuracy on a few details. Despite all that has been written by various apologists, it may be affirmed that the Congo Free State has yet made no adequate defence. Possibly it will appear in the report which, it is hoped, will be published in full by the official commission of inquiry now sitting.

in high quarters has never been given than in this abandonment of a plain and bounden duty.

A slight amount of public spirit on the part of the signatories of the Berlin Act would have sufficed to prevent Congolese affairs drifting into the present highly anomalous situation. That land is not Belgian, and it is not international—except in a strictly legal sense. It is difficult to say what it is if it be not the private domain of King Leopold and of several monopolist - controlling trusts. Probably the only way out of the present slough of despond is the definite assumption of sole responsibility by the Belgian people; for it should be remembered that a very large number of patriotic Belgians urgently long to redress evils for which they feel themselves to be indirectly, and to a limited extent, chargeable. At present, those who carefully study the evidence relating to the Berlin Conference of 1885, and the facts, so far as they are ascertainable to-day, must pronounce the Congo experiment to be a terrible failure.

## CHAPTER IX

### RUSSIA IN THE FAR EAST

"This war, waged . . . for the command of the waters of the Pacific Ocean, so urgently necessary for the peaceful prosperity, not only of our own, but of other nations."—The Czar's Proclamation of March 3, 1905.

OF all the collisions of racial interests that have made recent history, none has turned the thoughts of the world to regions so remote, and events so dramatic in their intensity and momentous in their results, as that which has come about in Manchuria. The Far Eastern Question is the outcome of the expansion of two vigorous races, that of Russia and Japan, at the expense of the almost torpid polity of China. The struggle has taken place in the debatable lands north and west of Korea, where Tartars and Chinese formerly warred for supremacy, and where geographical and commercial considerations enhance the value of the most northerly of the ice-free ports of the continent of Asia.

In order to understand the significance of this great struggle, we must look back to the earlier stages of the extension of Russian influence. Up to a very recent period the eastward growth of Russia affords an instance of swift and natural expansion. Picture on the one side a young and vigorous community, dowered with patriotic pride by the long and eventually triumphant conflict with the

Tartar hordes, and dwelling in dreary plains where Nature now and again drives men forth on the quest for a sufficiency of food. On the other hand, behold a vast territory, well watered, with no natural barrier between the Urals and the Pacific, sparsely inhabited by tribes of nomads having little in common. The one active community will absorb the ill-organised units as inevitably as the rising tide overflows the neighbouring mud-flats when once the intervening barrier is overtopped. In the case of Russia and Siberia the only barrier is that of the Ural mountains; and their gradual slopes form a slighter barrier than is anywhere else figured on the map of the world in so conspicuous a chain. The Urals once crossed, the slopes and waterways invite the traveller eastward.

The French revolutionists of 1793 used to say, "With bread and iron one can get to China." Russian pioneers had made good that boast nearly two centuries before it was uttered in Paris. The impelling force which set in motion the Muscovite tide originated with a man whose name is rarely heard outside Russia. Yet, if the fame of men were proportionate to the effect of their exploits, few names would be more widely known than that of Jermak. This man had been a hauler of boats up the banks of the Volga, until his strength, hardihood, and love of adventure impelled him to a freebooting life, wherein his powers of command and the fierce thoroughness of his methods speedily earned him the name of Jermak, "the millstone." In the year 1580, the wealthy family of the Stroganoffs, tempted by stories of the wealth to be gained from the fur-bearing animals of Siberia, turned their thoughts to Jermak and his robber band as the readiest tools for the conquest of those plains. The enterprise appealed to

Jermak and the hardy Cossacks with whom he had to do. He and his men were no less skilled in river craft than in fighting; and the roving Cossack spirit kindled at the thought of new lands to harry. Proceeding by boat from Perm, they worked their way into the spurs of the Urals, and then by no very long *portage* crossed one of its lower passes and found themselves on one of the tributaries of the Obi.

Thenceforth their course was easy. Jermak and his small band of picked fighters were more than a match for the wretchedly armed and craven-spirited Tartars, who fled at the sound of firearms. In 1581 the settlement, called Sibir, fell to the invaders; and, though they soon abandoned this rude encampment for a new foundation, the town of Tobolsk, yet the name Siberia recalls their pride at the conquest of the enemy's capital. The traditional skill of the Cossacks in the handling of boats greatly aided their advance, and despite the death of Jermak in battle, his men pressed on and conquered nearly the half of Siberia within a decade. What Drake and the sea-dogs of Devon were then doing for England on the Western main, was being accomplished for Russia by the ex-pirate and his band from the Volga. The two expansive movements were destined finally to meet on the shores of the Pacific in the northern creeks of what is now British Columbia.

The later stages in Russian expansion need not detain us here. The excellence of the Cossack methods in foraging, pioneer-work, and the forming of military settlements, consolidated the Muscovite conquests. The Tartars were fain to submit to the Czar, or to flee to the nomad tribes of Central Asia or Northern China. The invaders reached

the river Lena in the year 1630; and some of their adventurers voyaged down the Amur, and breasted the waves of the Pacific in 1636. Cossack bands conquered Kamchatka in 1699-1700.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the first collision between the white and the yellow races took place on the river Amur, which the Chinese claimed as their own. At first the Russians easily prevailed; but in the year 1689 they suffered a check. New vigour was then manifested in the councils of Peking, and the young Czar, Peter the Great, in his longing for triumphs over Swedes and Turks, thought lightly of gains at the expense of the "celestials." He therefore gave to Russian energies that trend westwards and southwards which after him marked the reigns of Catharine II., Alexander I., and, in part, of Nicholas I. The surrender of the Amur valley to China in 1689 ended all efforts of Russia in that direction for a century and a half. Many Russians believe that the earlier impulse was sounder and more fruitful in results for Russia than her meddling in the wars of the French Revolution and Empire.

Not till 1846 did Russia resume her march down the valley of the Amur; and then the new movement was partly due to British action. At that time the hostility of Russia and Britain was becoming acute on Asiatic and Turkish questions. Further, the first Anglo-Chinese War (1840-42) led to the cession of Hong-Kong to the distant islanders, who also had five Chinese ports opened to their trade. This enabled Russia to pose as the protector of China, and to claim points of vantage whence her covering wings might be extended over that Empire. The statesmen of Peking had little belief in the genuineness of these

<sup>1</sup> Vladimir, *Russia on the Pacific*.



offers, especially in view of the thorough exploration of the Amur region and the Gulf of Okhotsk which speedily ensued.

The Czar, in fact, now inaugurated a forward Asiatic policy, and confided it to an able governor, Muravieff (1847). The new departure was marked by the issue of an imperial ukase (1851) ordering the Russian settlers beyond Lake Baikal to conform to the Cossack system; that is, to become liable to military duties in return for the holding of land in the more exposed positions. Three years later Muravieff ordered six thousand Cossacks to migrate from these trans-Baikal settlements to the land newly acquired from China on the borders of Manchuria.<sup>1</sup> In the same year the Russians established a station at the mouth of the Amur, and in 1853 gained control over part of the Island of Saghalien.

For the present, then, everything seemed to favour Russia's forward policy. The tribes on the Amur were passive; an attack of an Anglo-French squadron on Petropaulovsk, a port in Kamchatka, failed (August, 1854); and the Russians hoped to be able to harry British commerce from this and other naval bases in the Pacific. Finally, the rupture with England and France, and the beginning of the Taeping rebellion in China, induced the Court of Peking to agree to Russia's demands for the Amur boundary, and for a subsequent arrangement respecting the ownership of the districts between the mouth of that river and the bay on which now stands the port of Vladivostok (May 15, 1858). The latter concession left the door open for Muravieff to push on Russia's claims to this important wedge of territory. His action was

<sup>1</sup> Popowski, *The Rival Powers in Central Asia*, p. 13.

characteristic. He settled Cossacks along the Ussuri River, a southern tributary of the Amur, and, by pressing ceaselessly on the celestials (then distracted by a war with England and France), he finally brought them to agree to the cession of the district around the new settlement, which was soon to receive the name of Vladivostok ("Lord of the East"). He also acquired for the Czar the Manchurian coast down to the bounds of Korea (November 2, 1860). Russia thus threw her arms around the great province which had provided China with her dynasty and her warrior caste, and was still one of the wealthiest and most cherished lands of that Empire. Having secured these points of vantage in Northern China, the Muscovites could await with confidence further developments in the decay of that once formidable organism.

Such, in brief, is the story of Russian expansion from the Urals to the Sea of Japan. Probably no conquest of such magnitude was ever made with so little expenditure of blood and money. In one sense this is its justification, that is, if we view the course of events, not by the limelight of abstract right, but by the ordinary daylight of expediency. Conquests which strain the resources of the victors and leave the vanquished longing for revenge, carry their own condemnation. On the other hand, the triumph of Russia over the ill-organised tribes of Siberia and Northern Manchuria reminds one of the easy and unalterable methods of nature, which compels a lower type of life to yield up its puny force for the benefit of a higher. It resembles the victory of man over quadrupeds, of order over disorder, of well-regulated strength over weakness and stupidity.

Muravieff deserves to rank among the makers of modern Russia. He waited his time, used his Cossack pawns as an effective screen to each new opening of the game, and pushed his foes hardest when they were at their weakest. Moreover, like Bismarck, he knew when to stop. He saw the limit that separated the practicable from the impracticable. He brought the Russian coast near to the latitudes where harbours are free from ice; but he forbore to encroach on Korea—a step which would have brought Japan on to the field of action. The Muscovite race, it was clear, had swallowed enough to busy its digestive powers for many a year; and it was partly on his advice that Russian North America was sold to the United States.

Still, Russia's advance southwards towards ice-free ports was only checked, not stopped. In 1861 a Russian man-of-war took possession of the Tshushima Isles between Korea and Japan, but withdrew on the protest of the British admiral. Six years later the Muscovites strengthened their grip on Saghalien, and thereafter exercised with Japan joint sovereignty over that island. The natural result followed. In 1875 Russia found means to eject her partner, the Japanese receiving as compensation undisputed claim to the barren Kuriles, which they already possessed.<sup>1</sup>

Even before this further proof of Russia's expansiveness, Japan had seen the need of adapting herself to the new conditions consequent on the advent of the Great Powers in the Far East. This is not the place for a description of the remarkable revolution of the years 1867-71.

<sup>1</sup> *The Russo-Japanese Conflict*, by K. Asakawa (1904), p. 67; *Europe and the Far East*, by Sir R. K. Douglas (1904), p. 191.

Suffice it to say that the events recounted above undoubtedly helped on the centralising of the powers in the hands of the Mikado, and the Europeanising of the institutions and armed forces of Japan. In face of aggressions by Russia and quarrels with the maritime Powers, a vigorous seafaring people felt the need of systems of organisation and self-defence other than those provided by the rule of feudal lords, and levies drilled with bows and arrows. The subsequent history of the Far East may be summed up in the statement that Japan faced the new situation with the brisk adaptability of a maritime people, while China plodded along on her old tracks with a patience and stubbornness eminently bovine.

The events which finally brought Russia and Japan into collision arose out of the obvious need for the construction of a railway from St. Peterburg to the Pacific having its terminus on an ice-free port. Only so could Russia develop the resources of Siberia and the Amur Province. In the sixties and seventies trans-continental railways were being planned and successfully laid in North America. But there is this difference; in the New World the iron horse has been the friend of peace; in the Far East of Asia it has hurried on the advent of war; and for this reason, that Russia, having no ice-free harbour at the end of her great Siberian line, was tempted to grasp at one which the yellow races looked on as altogether theirs.

The miscalculation was natural. The rapid extension of trade in the Pacific Ocean seemed to invite Russia to claim her full share in a development that had already enriched England, the United States, and, later, Germany and France; and events placed within the Muscovite grasp positions which fulfilled all the conditions

requisite for commercial prosperity and military and naval domination.

For many years past vague projects of a trans-Siberian railway had been in the air. In 1857 an English engineer offered to construct a horse tramway from Perm, across the Urals, and to the Pacific. An American also proposed to make a railway for locomotives from Irkutsk to the head waters of the Amur. In 1875 the Russian Government decided to construct a line from Perm as far as a western affluent of the river Obi; but owing to want of funds the line was carried no farther than Tiumen on the River Tobol (1880).

The financial difficulty was finally overcome by the generosity of the French, who, as we have already seen (Vol. II., Chapter I.), late in the eighties began to subscribe to all the Russian loans placed on the Paris Bourse. The scheme now became practicable, and in March, 1891, an imperial ukase appeared sanctioning the mighty undertaking. It was made known at Vladivostok by the Czarevitch (now Nicholas II.) in the course of a lengthy tour in the Far East; and he is known then to have gained that deep interest in those regions which has moulded Russian policy throughout his reign. Quiet, unostentatious, and even apathetic on most subjects, he then, as we may judge from subsequent events, determined to give to Russian energies a decided trend towards the Pacific. As Czar, he has placed that aim in the forefront of his policy. With him the Near East has always been second to the Far East; and in the critical years 1896-97, when the sufferings of Christians in Turkey became acute, he turned a deaf ear to the cries of myriads who had rarely sent their prayers northwards in vain. The most reasonable explanation of this callousness is that Nicholas II. at that time

had no ears save for the call of the Pacific Ocean. This was certainly the policy of his Ministers, Prince Lobánoff, Count Muravieff, and Count Lamsdorff. It was oceanic.

The necessary prelude to Russia's new policy was the completion of the trans-Siberian railway, certainly one of the greatest engineering feats ever attempted by man. While a large part of the route offers no more difficulty than the conquest of limitless levels, there are portions that have taxed to the utmost the skill and patience of the engineer. The deep trough of Lake Baikal has now (June, 1905) been circumvented by the construction of a railway (here laid with double tracks) which follows the rocky southern shore. This part of the line, 244 versts (162 miles) long, has involved enormous expense. In fifty-six miles there are thirty-nine tunnels, and thirteen galleries for protection against rock-slides. This short section is said to have cost £1,170,000. The energy with which the Government pushed on this stupendous work during the Russo-Japanese war yields one more proof of their determination to secure at all costs the aims which they set in view in and after the year 1891.<sup>1</sup>

Other parts of the track have also presented great difficulties. East of Lake Baikal the line gradually winds its way up to a plateau some three thousand feet higher than the lake, and then descends to treacherous marsh lands. The district of the Amur bristles with obstacles, not the least being the terrible floods that now and again (as in 1897) turn the whole valley into a trough of swirling waters.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See an article by Mr. J. M. Price in *The Fortnightly Review* for May, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> *Russia on the Pacific*, by "Vladimir"; *The Awakening of the East*, by P. Leroy-Beaulieu, chaps. ix., x.

All these difficulties have been overcome in course of time; but there remained the question of the terminus. Up to the year 1894 the objective had been Vladivostok; but the outbreak of the Chino-Japanese War at that time opened up vast possibilities. Russia could either side with the islanders and share with them the spoils of Northern China, or, posing as the patron of the celestials, claim some profitable *douceurs* as her reward.

She chose the latter alternative, and, in the opinion of some of her own writers, wrongly. The war proved the daring, the patriotism, and the organising skill of the Japanese to be as signal as the sloth and corruptibility of their foes. Then, for the first time, the world saw the utter weakness of China—a fact which several observers (including Lord Curzon) had vainly striven to make clear. Even so, when Chinese generals and armies took to their heels at the slightest provocation; when their battle-ships were worsted by Japanese armoured cruisers; when their great stronghold, Port Arthur, was stormed with a loss of about four hundred killed, the moral of it all was hidden from the wise men of the West. Patronising things were said of the Japanese as conquerors—of the Chinese; but few persons realised that a new Power had arisen. It seemed the easiest of undertakings to despoil the “venomous dwarfs” of the fruits of their triumph over China.<sup>1</sup>

The chief conditions of the Chino-Japanese Treaty of Shimonoseki (April 17, 1895) were the handing over to Japan the Island of Formosa and the Liaotung Peninsula. The latter was very valuable, inasmuch as it contained

<sup>1</sup> See the evidence adduced by V. Chirol, *The Far Eastern Question*, chap. xi., as to the *ultimately* aggressive designs of China on Japan.

good ice-free harbours which dominated the Yellow Sea and the Gulf of Pechili; and herein must be sought the reason for the action of Russia at this crisis. Li Hung Chang, the Chinese negotiator, had already been bought over by Russia in an important matter,<sup>1</sup> and he early disclosed the secret of the terms of peace with Japan. Russia was thus forewarned; and, before the treaty was ratified at Peking, her Government, acting in concert with those of France and Germany, intervened with a menacing declaration that the cession of the Liaotung Peninsula would give to Japan a dangerous predominance in the affairs of China and disturb the whole balance of power in the Far East. The Russian note addressed to Japan further stated that such a step would "be a perpetual obstacle to the permanent peace of the Far East." Had Russia alone been concerned, possibly the Japanese would have referred matters to the sword; but, when face to face with a combination of three Powers, they decided on May 4th to give way, and to restore the Liaotung Peninsula to China.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for the conduct of France and Germany in this matter are not fully known. We may safely conjecture that the Republic acted conjointly with the Czar in order to clinch the new Franco-Russian alliance, not from any special regard for China, a Power with which she had frequently come into collision respecting Tonquin. As for Germany, she was then entering on new colonial undertakings; and she doubtless saw in the joint intervention of 1895 a means of sterilising the Franco-Russian alliance, so far as she herself was concerned, and possibly

<sup>1</sup> *Manchu and Muscovite*, by B. L. Putnam Weale, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Asakawa, *op. cit.*, p. 76.



of gaining Russia's assent to the future German expansion in the Far East.

Here, of course, we are reduced to conjecture, but the conjecture is consonant with later developments. In any case, the new Triple Alliance was a temporary and artificial union, which prompt and united action on the part of Great Britain and the United States would have speedily dissolved. Unfortunately these Powers were engrossed in other concerns, and took no action to redress the balance which the self-constituted champions of political stability were upsetting to their own advantage.

The effects of their action were diverse, and for the most part unforeseen. In the first place, Japan, far from being discouraged by this rebuff, set to work to perfect her army and navy, and with a thoroughness which Roon and Moltke would have envied. Organisation, weapons, drill, marksmanship (the last a weak point in the war with China) were improved; heavy ironclads were ordered, chiefly in British yards, and, when procured, were handled with wonderful efficiency. Few, if any, of those "disasters" which are so common in the British navy in time of peace, occurred in the new Japanese navy—a fact which redounds equally to the credit of the British instructors and to the pupils themselves.

The surprising developments of the Far Eastern Question were soon to bring the new armaments to a terrible test. Japan and the whole world believed that the Liaotung Peninsula was made over to China in perpetuity. It soon appeared that the Czar and his Ministers had other views, and that, having used France and Germany for the purpose of warning off Japan, they were preparing schemes for the subjection of Manchuria to Russian influence. Or

rather, it is probable that Li Hung Chang had already arranged the following terms with Russia as the price of her intervention on behalf of China. The needs of the Court of Peking and the itching palms of its officials proved to be singularly helpful in the carrying out of the bargain. China being unequal to the task of paying the Japanese war indemnity, Russia undertook to raise a four per cent. loan of 400,000,000 francs—of course mainly at Paris—in order to cover the half of that debt. In return for this favour, the Muscovites required the establishment of a Russo-Chinese Bank having widespread powers, comprising the receipt of taxes, the management of local finances, and the construction of such railway and telegraph lines as might be conceded by the Chinese authorities.

This in itself was excellent "brokerage" on the French money, of which China was assumed to stand in need. At one stroke Russia ended the commercial supremacy of England in China, the result of a generation of commercial enterprise conducted on the ordinary lines, and substituted her own control, with powers almost equal to those of a Viceroy. They enabled her to displace Englishmen from various posts in Northern China and to clog the efforts of their merchants at every turn. The British Government, we may add, showed a singular equanimity in face of this procedure.

But this was not all. At the close of March, 1896, it appeared that the gratitude felt by the Chinese Andromeda to the Russian Perseus had ripened into a definite union. The two Powers framed a secret treaty of alliance which accorded to the northern state the right to make use of any harbour in China, and to levy Chinese troops in case of a conflict with an Asiatic State. In particular, the

Court of Peking granted to its ally the free use of Port Arthur in time of peace, or, if the other Powers should object, of Kiao-chau. Manchuria was thrown open to Russian officers for purposes of survey, etc., and it was agreed that on the completion of the trans-Siberian railway, a line should be constructed southwards to Talienwan or some other place, under the joint control of the two Powers.<sup>1</sup>

The treaty marks the end of the first stage in the Russification of Manchuria. Another stage was soon covered, and, as it seems, by the adroitness of Count Cassini, Russian Minister at Peking. The details, and even the existence, of the Cassini Convention of September 30, 1896, have been disputed; but there are good grounds for accepting the following account as correct: Russia received permission to construct her line to Vladivostok across Manchuria, thereby saving the northern detour down the difficult valley of the Amur; also to build her own line to Mukden, if China found herself unable to do so; and the line southwards to Talienwan and Port Arthur was to be made on Russian plans. Further, all these new lines built by Russia might be guarded by her troops, presumably to protect them from natives who objected to the inventions of the "foreign devils." As regards naval affairs, the Czar's Government gained the right to "lease" from China the harbour of Kiao-chau for fifteen years; and, in case of war, to make use of Port Arthur. The last clauses granted to Russian subjects the right to acquire mining rights in Manchuria, and to the Czar's officers to drill the levies of that province in the European style, should China desire to reorganise them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Asakawa, pp. 85-87.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. ii.

But the protector had not reaped the full reward of his timely intervention in the spring of 1895. He had not yet gained complete control of an ice-free harbour. In fact, the prize of Kiao-chau, nearly within reach, now seemed to be snatched from his grasp by Kaiser Wilhelm. The details are well known. Two German subjects who were Roman Catholic missionaries in the Shan-tung province were barbarously murdered by Chinese ruffians on November 1, 1897. The outrage was of a flagrant kind, but in ordinary times would have been condoned by the punishment of the offenders and a fine payable by the district. But the occasion was far from ordinary. A German squadron therefore steamed into Kiao-chau and occupied that important harbour.

There is reason to think that Germany had long been desirous of gaining a foothold in that rich province. The present writer has been assured by a geological expert, Professor Skertchley, who made the first map of the district for the Chinese authorities, that that map was urgently demanded by the German envoy at Peking about this time. In any case, the mineral wealth of the district undoubtedly influenced the course of events. In accordance with a revised version of the old Christian saying, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of—the Empire," the Emperor William despatched his brother, Prince Henry—the "mailed fist" of Germany—with a squadron to strengthen the imperial grip on Kiao-chau. The Prince did so without opposition either from China or Russia. Finally, on March 5, 1898, the Court of Peking confirmed to Germany the lease of that port and of the neighbouring parts of the province of Shan-tung.

The whole affair caused a great stir, because it seemed to

prelude a partition of China, and that, too, in spite of the well-meaning declarations of the Salisbury Cabinet in favour, first, of the integrity of that Empire, and, when that was untenable, of the policy of the "open door" for traders of all nations. Most significant of all was the conduct of Russia. As far as is known, she made no protest against the action of Germany in a district to which she herself had laid claim. It is reasonable, on more grounds than one, to suppose that the two Powers had come to some understanding, Russia conceding Kiao-chau to the Kaiser, provided that she herself gained Port Arthur and its peninsula. Obviously she could not have faced the ill-will of Japan, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States—all more or less concerned at her rapid strides southward; and it is at least highly probable that she bought off Germany by waiving her own claims to Kiao-chau, provided that she gained an ideal terminus for her Siberian line, and a great naval and military stronghold. It is also worth noting that the first German troops were landed at Kiao-chau on November 17, 1897, while three Russian warships steamed into Port Arthur on December 18th; and that the German "lease" was signed at Peking on March 5, 1898; while that accorded to Russia bears date March 27th.<sup>1</sup>

If we accept the naïve suggestion of the Russian author, "Vladimir," the occupation of Kiao-chau by Germany "forced" Russia "to claim some equivalent compensation." Or possibly the cession of Port Arthur was another of the items in Li Hung Chang's bargain with Russia. In any case, the Russian warships entered Port Arthur, at first as if for a temporary stay; when two British warships repaired thither the Czar's Government requested them to

<sup>1</sup> Asakawa, p. 110, note.

leave—a request with which the Salisbury Cabinet complied in an inexplicably craven manner (January, 1898). Rather more pressure was needed on the somnolent mandarins of Peking; but, under the threat of war with Russia if the lease of the Liaotung Peninsula were not granted by March 27th, it was signed on that day. She thereby gained control of that peninsula for twenty-five years, a period which might be extended “by mutual agreement.” The control of all the land forces was vested in a Russian official; and China undertook not to quarter troops to the north without the consent of the Czar. Port Arthur was reserved to the use of Russian and Chinese ships of war; and Russia gained the right to erect fortifications.

The British Government, which had hitherto sought to uphold the integrity of China, thereupon sought to “save its face” by leasing Wei-hai-wei (July 1st). An excuse for the weakness of the Cabinet in Chinese affairs has been put forward, namely, that the issue of the Sudan campaign was still in doubt, and that the efforts of French and Russians to reach the upper Nile from the French Congo and Southern Abyssinia compelled Ministers to concentrate their attention on that great enterprise. But this excuse will not bear examination. Strength at any one point of an Empire is not increased by discreditable surrenders at other points. No great statesman would have proceeded on such an assumption.

Obviously the balance of gain in these shabby transactions in the north of China was enormously in favour of Russia. She now pushed on her railway southwards with all possible energy. It soon appeared that Port Arthur could not remain an open port, and it was closed to merchant ships. Then Talienwan was named in place of it,

but under restrictions which made the place of little value to foreign merchants. Thereafter the new port of Dalny was set apart for purposes of commerce, but the efficacy of the arrangements there has never been tested. In the intentions of the Czar, Port Arthur was to become the Gibraltar of the Far East, while Dalny, as the commercial terminus of the trans-Siberian line, figured as the Cadiz of the new age of exploration and commerce opening out to the gaze of Russia.

That motives of genuine philanthropy played their part in the Far Eastern policy of the Czar may readily be granted; but the enthusiasts who acclaimed him as the world's peacemaker at The Hague Congress (May, 1899) were somewhat troubled by the thought that he had compelled China to cede to his enormous Empire the very peninsula the acquisition of which by little Japan had been declared to be an unwarrantable disturbance of the balance of power in the Far East.

These events caused a considerable sensation in Great Britain, even in a generation which had become inured to "graceful concessions." In truth, the part played by her in the Far East has been a sorry one; and if there be eager partisans who still maintain that British Imperialism is an unscrupulously aggressive force, ever on the search for new enemies to fight and new lands to annex, a course of study in the Blue Books dealing with Chinese affairs in 1897-99 may with some confidence be prescribed as a sedative and lowering diet. It seems probable that the weakness of British diplomacy induced the belief at St. Petersburg that no opposition of any account would be forthcoming. With France acting as the complaisant treasurer, and Germany acquiescent, the Czar and his advisers might well

believe that they had reached the goal of their efforts, "the domination of the Pacific."

With the Boxer movement of the years 1899-1900 we have here no concern. Considered pathologically, it was only the spasmodic protest of a body which the dissectors believed to be ready for operation. To assign it solely to dislike of European missionaries argues sheer inability to grasp the laws of evidence. Missionaries had been working in China for several decades, and were no more disliked than other "foreign devils." The rising was clearly due to indignation at the rapacity of the European Powers. We may note that it gave the Russian governor of the town of Blagovestchensk an opportunity of cowing the Chinese of Northern Manchuria by slaying and drowning some forty-five hundred persons at that place (July, 1900). Thereafter Russia invaded Manchuria and claimed the unlimited rights due to actual conquest. On April 8, 1902, she promised to withdraw; but her persistent neglect to fulfil that promise (cemented by treaty with China) led to the outbreak of hostilities with Japan.<sup>1</sup>

We can now see that Russia, since the accession of Nicholas II., has committed two great faults in the Far East. She has overreached herself; and she has overlooked one very important factor in the problem—Japan. The subjects of the Mikado quivered with rage at the insult implied by the seizure of Port Arthur; but, with the instinct of a people at once proud and practical, they thrust down the flames of resentment and turned them into a mighty motive force. Their preparations for war, steady and methodical before, now gained redoubled

<sup>1</sup> Asakawa, chap. vii.; and for the Korean Question, chaps. xvi., xvii.



energy; and the whole nation thrilled secretly but irresistibly to one cherished aim, the recovery of Port Arthur. How great is the power of chivalry and patriotism the world has now seen; but it is apt to forget that love of life and fear of death are feelings alike primal and inalienable among the Japanese as among other peoples. The inspiring force which nerved some forty thousand men gladly to lay down their lives on the hills around Port Arthur was the feeling that they were helping to hurl back in the face of Russia the gauntlet which she had there so insolently flung down as to an inferior race.

## CHAPTER X

### EPILOGUE

"Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: methinks I see her as an eagle renewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance."—MILTON.

THE foregoing studies, however imperfect, will have prepared the way in some measure for a brief survey of the fortunes of the European peoples in the three decades passed under review. In the first place, we may note that this epoch, momentous as it is in the annals of mankind, does not form a homogeneous whole. If we view events according to their inner determining causes we shall see that those of the years 1870-78 belong to the period inaugurated by the Franco-Austrian War of 1859 in North Italy, which I have ventured to call the period of national achievement. The impulse which induced powerful sovereigns, keen-sighted statesmen, and hitherto divided peoples to throw their energies into the work of unification led to the solid gains of 1860 and 1866 in Italy and North Germany, without which the dramatic finale of 1870 could never have been attained.

For the busy multitude the startling climax is apt to obscure the preparatory stages, especially in the case of complex popular movements. Therefore, as a concession.

to the habits of thought of to-day, we may detach the events of 1870 from their inner connections and regard them as the beginnings of an epoch, though they really were but the end of one that was passing away. We should remember, however, that the current of events which carried King William to Versailles and Victor Emmanuel to Rome resulted from a concurrence of favouring forces set in motion by the national enthusiasms of two long-divided peoples, the sturdy patriotism of their dynasties, and the far-seeing statesmanship of Cavour and Bismarck.

Even so, the goal could scarcely have been reached but for the utter weakness of the opponents, Napoleon III. and Pius IX. Their ignominious fall may serve to remind the world of the worthlessness of mere names and the weakness of ideas that have no relation to the real life of the age. A compromise between autocracy and democracy proved to be unworkable even in the hands of a genius; and where the great Napoleon failed in the first decades of the century the nephew could scarcely hope to succeed amidst the movements of a more hopeful and determined generation. As to the impossibility of upholding the ideas of Hildebrand in the times of Mazzini and Garibaldi, nothing need be said. Here names have significance and value.

The removal of Napoleon III. from the scene would alone have sufficed to steady the course of politics. All the Powers had cause to distrust him and felt some measure of relief at the collapse of his "long adventure." But there were other causes that tended towards stability. The completion of the national movements in Germany and Italy put an end to the period of unrest supervening on the Napoleonic wars; and the lands where revolution had been endemic now took their places among the

"conservative Powers." Owing to the rise of national feelings among her motley peoples, Austria was not in a position to seek revenge for her exclusion from Germany and Italy; but proceeded to deal with her internal problems, and, after 1878, to assimilate the new province, Bosnia. Another sufferer by recent events, the Papacy, was also unable actively to resent the intrusion of King Victor Emmanuel into Rome, owing to the weakness of its former patrons, France and Austria. The accession of Italy to the Austro-German compact rendered futile all the hopes of the Ultramontanes to reverse the events of 1870. Thus, while the middle of the nineteenth century saw Europe distracted by innumerable discords, the closing decades have been marked by stability, repose, and in some respects torpor.

These remarks obviously do not apply to the Balkan Peninsula. The force of nationality, after moulding anew the boundaries and policies of central Europe, sped eastwards to arouse to activity races that had long lain helpless under the heel of the Turk. There again the problem was no new one. It was as old as the grievances of Christians ground down by their Moslem overlords. Thanks, indeed, to the new spirit that was in the air, the pent-up indignation and long-nursed enthusiasm of those Slavonic peoples found readier expression than heretofore; but the movement of 1876 formed, as it were, the mightiest wave of a long-threatening storm, preluded by the never-ceasing ground-swell of Bulgarian agony and the Servian upheavals of 1808 and 1862. In the events of 1876-78 we may note the sympathetic thrill that shot through peoples who had won their own civic freedom so recently as not yet to have forgotten the claims of distressed Humanity.

*Haud ignara mali miseris succurrere disco*

could then be written as the motto of the peoples of Great Britain, France, and Italy; and these generous feelings, as distinct from the policy of cabinets, played a foremost part in the tragic drama of Balkan liberation. The influence of racial and religious enthusiasm in Russian action at that same time can be denied only by the half-informed cynic. Alexander II. could no more have stayed the impulse of his people in 1876 than Charles Albert could have checked that of the Piedmontese in 1848 and 1849.

To the present writer it has always seemed that the instincts of the peoples of England and Russia were then far more statesmanlike than the statecraft of cabinets; and that the governments of London and St. Petersburg, by paying more heed to the deep-seated convictions of their subjects, might have avoided those causes of friction which have permanently embittered their policy. They chose otherwise. The Beaconsfield Ministry threw down the gauntlet to Russia in the supposed interests of the Indian Empire, and the Muscovites, accepting the challenge, at once proceeded to threaten India on her most exposed frontier, with results which we have seen. Viewing the policy of Britain and Russia on the Eastern Question in the clearer light of to-day—an advantage which the critic has over the statesman—it must be evident to non-partisan observers that the interests of both Powers might have been safeguarded by a friendly understanding in the year 1876 far better than by the course of conduct which placed them on opposite sides.

That also was the opinion of the foremost statesman of the time. In June, 1878, shortly before the Congress of Berlin, Bismarck strongly advised Lord Beaconsfield to

gain the friendship of Russia by an arrangement concerning a future partition of Turkey that would secure to England the reversion of Egypt. The morality of the proposal was not of a high class; but perhaps we may here apply the remark of Mirabeau: "*La petite morale est l'ennemi de la grande.*" In any case, Russia's hostility in and after 1878 entailed the Afghan War and frontier troubles in India, past and prospective. True, the Nile valley has come to England, but only after a long interval of time, the length of which may probably be ascribed to the enmity of Russia. In the opinion of many, the Panjdeh crisis of the spring of 1885 was forced on by the Czar, so as to ensure England's abandonment of the valley of the middle Nile. However that may be, the unending hostility of Russia, as shown by her conduct in Central Asia, Persia, Northern China, in administrative affairs in Egypt, and in the general diplomacy of the world, has clogged British policy at every turn, and probably helped to bring about the discreditable surrenders of the years 1884-86 and 1895-97. The earlier of these were largely due to Bismarck's determination to secure colonies; but even he could scarcely have succeeded in humiliating the Island Power, especially in respect to African affairs, had he not reckoned on the ready support of St. Petersburg.

At present it is premature to dogmatise on these matters, but there are grounds for believing that the influence which worked unchangeably against England in the last twenty-two years of the nineteenth century was the influence of Russia, and that this hostility resulted mainly, if not solely, from Lord Beaconsfield's policy in the Eastern Question. No unprejudiced person can survey the very critical situation of the United Kingdom in the eighties

without connecting it with the desire of Russia for revenge; and the isolated position which the British Government took up in and after 1876 laid it open to telling rebuffs both from Czar and Kaiser for several years to come. The foreign policy of the Gladstone Cabinet in 1880-85 was often weak; but in all fairness we should remember that its difficulties with Russia and Germany were the heritage bequeathed by the Earl of Beaconsfield.

Fortunately for the British race, Russian statesmen committed a series of blunders which, within a short space, ranged against them the Central Powers and the peoples of the Balkans that owed their freedom to Muscovite prowess. The affairs of purblind, stumbling mortals, as we know, are often redressed, not so much by their own efforts as by the folly of their enemies; the principle of balance which enters so benignly into human life may, after all, be due to the visitation of Governments in turn by some active and impartial Nemesis. Assuredly, among all the mistakes of the present age, none is more astounding than that whereby Russia mortally wounded her Roumanian ally by the appropriation of the cherished strip of Bessarabia; and then, as if it were not enough to shut and lock the portals of the Balkans hitherto always flung open at her summons, she, or rather Alexander III., proceeded to dragoon the Bulgarians into opposition. If Sancho Panza could suddenly have been spirited on to the throne of the Czars, we can scarcely imagine him perpetrating the colossal follies that will ever be associated with the kidnapping of Prince Alexander and the Kaulbars Mission.

As it was, Russian diplomacy threw away the advantages that Russian valour had gained. Furthermore,

Alexander III. by his handling of the Bulgarian Question wrecked the Three Emperors' League, which in the years 1884-86 promised to be a potent instrument for the humbling of England. The services rendered by Lord Salisbury and Sir William White to Bulgaria in 1885-86 have been widely and generously acknowledged. Less obvious is the debt of gratitude which England owes to Prince Alexander of Bulgaria and Stambuloff for their manly stand against the dictation of the Czar, which led that potentate into by-paths of intrigue far removed from the course marked out by the Chanceries of Berlin and Vienna. The beginnings of the Franco-Russian alliance are in part discernible amidst the maze of intrigues which centred around Sophia.

The incoming of a new Continental balance of power in the closing years of the eighties gave to British statesmen a time of respite after the very pressing dangers of the years 1884-86. Thereafter it was possible for a man of commanding genius to make the United Kingdom the arbiter in European affairs; and the fact that this was never done with any effect is certainly not creditable to the English diplomacy. As has been seen in the review of African affairs and those of Northern China, Great Britain was generally content to wait on the decisions of the other Powers; and where the situation was retrieved, the saving influence generally emanated from some British explorer or merchant.

To these statements we must add an important qualification, namely, that the Sudan policy of successive Ministries exhibited signs of a well-marked purpose and firm resolve. The result was seen at the time of the Fashoda incident; and a consideration of that affair prompts the conjecture that, had the statesmen of Eng-



land determined to benefit by their position at the middle of the European see-saw, they might have brought overwhelming pressure to bear on the Sultan of Turkey, and thereby prevented the recurrence of those massacres and outrages in Armenia and Macedonia for which the Great Powers were ultimately and collectively responsible. That the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom should have paraded before the world his inability to stir in a matter so deeply concerning the honour of his State must be considered the climax of cynical fatuity.

In truth, if we survey the annals of Great Britain in the period passed under review, we shall find grave cause for misgiving chequered by a feeling of thankfulness that the Empire has survived. It has had to face a situation more serious than any which has come about since the Napoleonic War; for the present age has seen the growth of a mighty State in central Europe, with whose interests the United Kingdom has at several points come into sharp collision. France has recovered from her overthrow in 1870 and occupies a position sounder, if not stronger, than she did before that time of testing. The difficulties of Russia arising from an overweening sense of her strength in the Far East are at present acute; but her rallying powers were manifested after the wars of 1855 and 1877; and her ability to give trouble on Great Britain's most vulnerable border, that of the north-west of India, is far greater than it was at the time of the Panjdeh affair (1885). At present it seems scarcely to have come home to the English people that they are practically conterminous with the greatest of military empires, and have to face difficulties of transport, in the case of a war on the western Afghan frontier, far greater than those which confront Russia. In respect

to numbers, they cannot hope to compete with her as matters stand; for, apart from Japan, they have no ally.

Yet, despite these facts, British policy proceeded apparently in a hand-to-mouth fashion, trusting to the chapter of accidents which has so often been serviceable. The fault, moreover, lay ultimately, not with English statesmen, but with the nation as a whole, obstinately preoccupied as it was and is with sport or party politics, while large sections are debased by drinking and betting. When a considerable part of it is thus unmanned, questions of vital import are apt to be scouted, simply because they do not appeal immediately to the pocket or to the craving for sensation. Speaking with all due caution, we may assert that the prevalent feeling on matters of national defence and imperial policy is still one of flabby optimism, varied now and again by intervals of flurried anxiety and bootless extravagance. On the whole, the patriotism of the average citizen rises and falls inversely with the Income Tax; and as long as that is the case, politicians will think, first of preparing popular budgets, and second of matters affecting national defence.<sup>1</sup>

The same is true of British policy in international affairs. Except in the important questions centring in Egypt, and the north-west of India, where the record is more creditable, we are struck by the lack of the qualities of foresight, sagacity, and enterprise, which have raised Germany to her present position. There, doubtless, the controlling and impelling agencies have been carried to excess; but the result has been the most extraordinary development of national policy and national efficiency.

<sup>1</sup> See the warning speech of Earl Roberts in the House of Lords on July 10, 1905.

Japan offers a still more signal instance of what can be done by a people resolved to grapple with an urgent problem, and to carry it through to a victorious issue. Even Bulgaria affords a noteworthy example of a people determined to overcome all the dangers that encircle it.

This quiet determination, this healthy tension of all the faculties of a people, can scarcely be seen in the British race of to-day. For the Court circles and wealthy classes life is, in the main, an affair of amusement; and where this is the case public affairs run the risk of being treated with aristocratic *hauteur* or amateurish complacency. It does not inspire confidence when one remembers that, during thirty years chequered by crises of the gravest character, no serious attempt, certainly no successful attempt, was made to find an ally. The Continental Powers, on the other hand, by means of their alliances were able repeatedly to ride rough-shod over British interests without fear of retaliation, because they knew that no statesman at Westminster was strong enough, and able enough, to turn to account the principle of the balance of power, and tilt the European balance against them.

The fact that in and after the year 1887 the Continental States grouped themselves in two opposing and nearly equal masses ought to have favoured the policy of a powerful outsider, provided that he knew his own mind, and had the courage to take the initiative in time of need. Passivity is the worst of faults in such a situation. Yet, so far as is known, British policy in the years 1887-1900 was provokingly undecided and timidly passive, except on the one occasion noticed above; and the case of Fashoda enables us to gauge the advantages which a more decided and dignified conduct might have brought in its train

elsewhere. Fortunately, since the year 1901, these defects have in large measure vanished.

In this connection we may observe that a firm policy is not conducive to war. It is the most elementary of blunders to suppose that the cause of peace is furthered by a timid policy. The history of Prussia under Frederick William IV., together with other cases nearer at hand, might be cited in proof of the assertion that a long series of concessions or surrenders begets a feeling of irritation at home, and of contempt among neighbours; and these feeling are the fruitful parents of war. Peace is best assured by the steady maintenance of a course of conduct which, springing from a due sense of self-respect, inspires respect in others. If Aristotle in his survey of the virtues had included love of peace, we venture to think that he would have placed it as a mean between two extremes—an overbearing disregard of the claims of others, and a proneness to make graceful concessions. Using the slang of to-day, he might have assigned it a middle place between “Jingoism” and “peace at any price.”

The mention of these phrases leads us to notice briefly the quick flow and ebb of public sentiment on matters that may be styled imperial. In the view of the present writer, one of the misfortunes attending Lord Beaconsfield's policy on the Eastern Question was that it dissociated the new feeling of imperialism from those humanitarian sentiments which lay at the root of the Balkan problem. Imperialism, in the sense of a determination to uphold the British Empire in all its parts and interests, was a perfectly natural growth in the seventies, when Germany and other States rushed to the front rank and brought into world-politics a keenness of competition unknown before. Britain could

only hope to hold her own by drawing nearer to her children beyond the seas. But to link this essentially family feeling with the maintenance of Abdul Hamid's tyranny, and with a cynical disregard for the claims of the oppressed Christians of the Balkans, was an act of sheer prostitution. The repugnance which it aroused found expression in Professor Freeman's utterance at St. James's Hall (December 8, 1876): "Perish the interests of England, perish our dominions in India, sooner than that we should strike one blow or speak one word on behalf of the wrong against the right."

This glow of moral indignation lent force to the Liberal revival at the close of the seventies which carried Mr. Gladstone back to power. But the whole course of his foreign policy, or that of Lord Derby, was to reveal the danger of placing imperial interests in a secondary place. As was seen in the chapter dealing with the partition of Africa, the vital needs of the Empire were saved at several points only by urgent pressure from non-official quarters or by the prompt action of explorers. The pendulum of public opinion, therefore, swung back towards imperialism, but imperialism of the nobler, saner type which found expression in Tennyson's lines:

Britain's myriad voices call  
"Sons be welded each and all  
Into one imperial whole,  
One with Britain heart and soul!  
One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne,  
Britons, hold your own!"

The former antimony has not by any means vanished. Imperialism still has its baser alloy; and so long as this persists, the cry "Perish the interests of England" will find an echo, sometimes thin and artificial enough. Here, then, as elsewhere, we find the welfare of the English

Commonwealth to have been impaired by the events of 1876-77 and by the divisions to which they gave rise. Differences of opinion must often occur among a free people; but it is seldom that they cause oscillations of sentiment so sharp as those which unsteadied the English national policy in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

We may venture to express the hope that with greater experience will come in due course a truer insight into the relation that should subsist between insular and imperial affairs. In times of dull trade and high taxation there is a danger that attention will be bestowed almost wholly on home politics. In periods marked by prosperity and contentment the affairs of the Empire tend to overshadow local concerns. The United Kingdom cannot afford to relax its energies in either sphere. To neglect domestic reforms is to court the fate of Carthage; to disregard the claims of Great Britain's young Commonwealths beyond the seas is to follow in the wake of Spain. Assuredly, of all peoples that have ever faced political problems, the British race needs the widest vision, the sanest judgment, the most careful and unremitting study of public affairs, both internal and imperial.

The lesson that lies clear on the surface of our present historical inquiry for all who have eyes to see is that the responsibility for the public weal rests more with the masses of the people than with its officials. Only by whole-hearted exertions and self-denying sacrifices have the great national movements of the present age reached their goal; and these qualities are not apparent in the younger generation of Britons. That they will appear when an urgent need arises may be hoped for from past experience; but the fortunes of States are now decided by timely, careful, and

thorough preparations. In this respect there is room for grave apprehension. It may be that the next generation will find the defence of the Empire a harder task than its acquisition was to England's forefathers in less strenuous times.

Turning to matters of even wider moment, we may try to point out some of the influences exerted by the great national movements on the life of the present age. One of them, the solidifying of the European fabric, has been already noticed; and, seeing that this process has been followed by a grouping of hostile forces of approximately equal strength, the great States have, as it were, thrust their roots into other continents in order to find the opportunities of expansion closed to them nearer home. In short, the crystallisation of national existence at home has necessitated the eager exploitation of new lands which forms so noteworthy a feature of the life of to-day. Only in one case has a non-European race been able to resist this expansive force; and the success of Japan seems to foreshadow a time, probably still far distant, when other non-Aryans may learn to use with effect the methods of Europe in order to stay the aggrandisement of her sons. When that time arrives, a new phase of civilisation will dawn. Meanwhile the day belongs to the European peoples and to their vigorous offshoots. The unreality of the talk about "the yellow peril" is at once apparent if we put ourselves in the place of the yellow, brown, and black peoples, and observe the magnitude and persistence of the inroads of the whites.

This ascendancy—due very largely to the building up of the States of Europe on the solid basis of nationality—has not been accomplished without losses, which are none the

less serious because they cannot be assessed by financial standards. Chief among them is the tendency to excessive organisation, drill, and strain observable in the Continental Governments of to-day. As a consequence, the freshness of individual life, characteristic of an age of smaller States and more modest ambitions, has given place to a general sameness and respectable mediocrity, highly satisfactory to the drill-sergeant and tax-collector, but not fruitful in original achievements. The grinding down of the corners of the individual by the mills of Government is doubtless partly responsible for the lack of distinction in the literature and arts of the age.

Perhaps even more fatal to excellence in the sphere of the imagination is the sense of disappointment, especially prevalent in Italy and Germany, that the attainment of national unity has led to few of the blissful results foretold by the prophets of those movements. After struggling for a generation through a wilderness of plots and punishments, those two peoples reached the Promised Land, only to find it a parade ground. What wonder that the other nations, on undergoing the same chastening experience, should manifest little of that activity in the realms of the ideal which betokens buoyancy of life. The example of the England of Elizabeth might have led us to expect an outburst of song after the defeat of the national enemy and the fulfilment of the nation's cherished desire. But Europe is no "nest of singing-birds" to-day; for, apart from the pressure of the governing machine, there is at hand the benumbing influence of disenchantment. The hopeful dawn of the present age, irradiated by the teachings of Fichte and Mazzini, has ended in the garish noon of the Bismarckian ascendancy.



Chief among the influences that drain away the vital strength from the brain to the muscles of the body politic, we may reckon the portentous growth of armaments, themselves an outcome of the national struggles of the nineteenth century. No strain is so continuous, exacting, and hopeless as this. Montesquieu, looking on at this symptom in its early beginnings, penned a passage which has a curiously modern ring:

“A new distemper has spread itself over Europe; it has infected our princes, and induces them to keep up an exorbitant number of troops. It has its redoublings, and of necessity becomes contagious. . . . Each monarch keeps as many armies on foot as if his people were in danger of being exterminated; and they give the name of peace to this general effort of all against all.”<sup>1</sup>

What was true of the middle of the eighteenth century is trebly true of the dawn of the twentieth century. Viewing the matter broadly, we must admit that the present state of armed truce combines many of the worst evils of war and of an emasculating torpor. It is neither a state of rest which builds up the fabric of humanity, nor a time of heroic endeavour such as sometimes mitigates the evils of war. The powers of the race and of the individual are quickened either by healthful repose or by a strenuous struggle on behalf of some great cause. Neither of these conditions has fallen to the lot of the great nations of Europe since the year 1878.

The newly made peoples, after leaping at one bound to manhood, have had to bow the neck to burdens heavy to be borne, and from which they see no other relief than the far-off glimmering hope that the increase of their own load

<sup>1</sup> Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des Loix*, bk. xiii., ch. xvii.

may perchance discourage their adversary and prolong the armed truce. This state of things begets no joy in life, nothing but a feverish resolve to snatch at passing sensations. The individual is crushed by a sense of helplessness as he gazes at the armed millions on all sides of him. Though a freeman in the constitutional sense of the term, he has entered into a state of military serfdom. There he is but a bondman toiling to add his few blocks to the colossal pyramid of war which imposes respect on some enemy away in the desert. From that life there can come no song. From those weltering masses, engaged in piling up work upon work against some remote contingency, there rises, and will still more arise, a dull, confused, questioning murmur, whether the whips of fear which drive them on are not wielded by some malignant Fury masquerading in the garb of Peace; whether the whole gigantic effort is not a hideous nightmare, a game with men's lives doomed to end in stalemate.

## APPENDIX I

### STATE OF BOSNIA IN 1875

BY kind permission of Mr. Arthur J. Evans, M.A. (Oxon.), I quote passages from pp. 254-57 of his work *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina on Foot* (1876), which bear on the question whether the revolt of the summer and autumn of 1875 was the result of instigation from outside or of the exceptional tyranny of the Turks at that time. The date of the entry in Mr. Evans's Journal is August 22, 1875: "To-day we made the acquaintance of the German Consul, Count von Bothmar, who expressed considerable surprise at our arriving here unmolested. From him and the other members of the consular body, who were very ready to supply us with full details as to the stirring events that are taking place around us, we learnt many interesting facts relative to the causes and course of the insurrection in Bosnia. These accounts, and others from trustworthy sources, reveal such frantic oppressions and gross misgovernment as must be hardly credible to Englishmen. We have heard all that can be said on the Turkish side, but the main facts remain unshaken.

"The truth is, that outside Serajevo and a few of the larger towns where there are Consuls or 'resident Europeans,' neither the honour, property, nor the lives of Christians are safe. Gross outrages against the person—murder itself—can be committed in the rural districts with impunity. The authorities are blind; and it is quite a common thing for the gendarmes to let the perpetrator of the gross-est outrage, if a Mussulman, escape before their eyes. Miss Irby, who has made many inquiries on these subjects,

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estimates that in the Medgliss, the only court where Christian evidence is even legally admitted, 'the evidence of twenty Christians would be outweighed by two Mussulmans.' But why, it may be asked, do not the Christians appeal to the Consuls for protection? In the first place, in a mountainous country like Bosnia, with little means of communication, to do so would in most cases be a physical impossibility. In the second place, as Count Bothmar assured us, if such complaint is made to a Consul, so surely is the complaining rayah more cruelly oppressed than before; nor is consular authority so omnipresent as to save him and his family from ruin. 'God alone knows,' he exclaimed, 'what the rayahs suffer in the country districts!' Remembering the revolting scenes, of which I had been a witness, at the Christian gathering near Comusina, I could believe this.

"But the most galling oppression, and the main cause of the present revolt, is to be found in the system and manner of taxation. The centralised government, set up in Bosnia since 1851, is so much machinery for wringing the uttermost farthing out of the unhappy Bosniac rayah. The desperate efforts of Turkish financiers, on the eve of national bankruptcy, have at last made the burden of taxation more than even the long-suffering Bosniac can bear. It was the last straw.

"The principal tax—besides the house and land tax, and that paid by the 'Christian,' in lieu of military service, which is wrung from the poorest rayah for every male of his family down to the baby in arms—is the eighth, or, as it is facetiously called by the tax-collector, the tenth, which is levied on all produce of the earth. With regard to the exaction of this tax, every conceivable iniquity is practised. To begin with, its collection is farmed out to middle-men, and these *ex officio* pitiless, are usually by origin the scum of the Levant. The Osmanli, or the Slavonic Mahometan, possesses a natural dignity and self-respect which disinclines him for such dirty work. The

men who come forward and offer the highest price for the license of extortion are more often Christians—Fanariote Greeks—adventurers from Stamboul, members of a race perhaps the vilest of mankind. No considerations of honour, or religion, or humanity, restrain these wretches. Having acquired the right to farm the taxes of a given district, the Turkish officials and gendarmerie are bound to support them in wringing the uttermost farthing out of the *misera contribuens plebs*, and it is natural that this help should be most readily forthcoming when needed to break the resistance of the rayah.

“These men time their visitation well. They appear in the villages before the harvest is gathered, and assess the value of the crops according to the present prices, which, of course, are far higher just before the harvest than after it. But the rayahs would be well contented if their exactions stopped here. They possess, however, a terrible lever for putting the screw on the miserable tiller. The harvest may not be gathered till the tax, which is pitilessly levied in cash, has been extorted. If the full amount—and they often double or treble the legal sum—is not forthcoming, the tax-gatherer simply has to say—‘Then your harvest shall rot on the ground till you pay it!’ And the rayah must see the produce of his toil lost, or pay a ruinous imposition, which more than swamps his profits. Or, if he still remains obstinate, there are other paraphernalia of torture worthy of the vaults of the Inquisition. A village will occasionally band together to defend themselves from these extortioners. Thereupon the tithe-farmer applies to the civil power, protesting that if he does not get the full amount from the village, he will be unable in his turn to pay the Government. The zaptiehs, the factotums of the Turkish officials, are immediately quartered on the villagers, and live on them, insult their wives, and ill-treat their children. With the aid of these gentry, all kinds of personal tortures are applied to the recalcitrant. In the heat of summer men are stripped naked and tied to a tree,

smear'd over with honey or other sweet stuff, and left to the tender mercies of the insect world. For winter extortion it is found convenient to bind people to stakes, and leave them bare-footed to be frost-bitten; or at other times they are shoved into a pigstye, and cold water poured on them. A favourite plan is to drive a party of rayahs up a tree, or into a chamber, and then smoke them with green wood. Instances are recorded of Bosniac peasants being buried up to their heads in earth, and left to repent at leisure."

## APPENDIX II

### SKOBELEFF'S PLAN FOR THE INVASION OF INDIA <sup>1</sup>

THE following project by the late General Skobelev was published in the Russian *Monthly Historical Review* for December, 1883. It was addressed by General Skobelev, in January, 1877, from Khokand, to an intimate friend; and it was afterwards found among the papers of the late Prince Cheraski:

"It has been frequently said that from Central Asia Russia can threaten the British rule in India, and that it is therefore absolutely necessary for England at this juncture to check the advance of the Russian troops in Turkestan.

"If we look around us, we shall find that our position in Turkestan is indeed most formidable, and that the apprehensions of the English are not groundless. We have established a strong base in Central Asia, with an army of about 40,000 men, from which we shall always be able to detach a force of not less than 10,000 or 12,000 men for operations outside the limits of the province; at the same time, we may trust implicitly in the fidelity of our subjects, for even now there is not the slightest indication of any combination of the Mohammedans of Turkey with those of Central Asia.

"By reinforcing the troops in Turkestan, say with six companies from Western Siberia, with as many Siberian Cossacks as could be spared, with one battery, and with three regiments of Cossacks from Orenburg, we might

<sup>1</sup> I have omitted the less important parts [J. H. R.].

organise a column of about 14,000 or 15,000 men. Such a column thrown across the Hindu Kush could effect a great deal.

"The position of the English in India has been said to be precarious by every one who has studied the question. It has been stated that the English tenure of India is by the sword alone; that the number of European troops in India is not more than sufficient to keep order in the country, and that the native army is not to be trusted. Every one referring to the question of a Russian invasion of India has declared that an approach to the frontier would be enough to raise a rebellion.

"It may be said that an enterprise against the English in India is a matter of great risk; that it might end disastrously for the Russian force. I do consider, and we should not close our eyes to the fact, that the enterprise would indeed be a risky one. We should, however, bear in mind that if we were successful we should entirely demolish the British Empire in India; and the effect of this in England cannot be calculated beforehand. Competent English authorities admit that an overthrow on the frontiers of India might even produce a social revolution in England, because for the last twenty years England has been tied closer than ever to her Indian possessions by reasons and phenomena (including an incapacity for war) identical with those of France. In a word, the downfall of the British supremacy in India would be the beginning of the downfall of England.

"Should our venture not result in complete success, *i. e.*, should a rebellion fail to break out in India; and should we fail to cross the frontier, we should at all events compel the English to keep the whole of their Indian army in Hindustan and render it impossible for them to spare any portion of it for service in Europe; they would indeed find themselves obliged to transport some of their forces from Europe to India. In short, we could, to a great extent, paralyse the land forces of England as regards either a



European war or the selection of a new theatre of war, from the Persian Gulf by Tabriz to Tiflis in connection with the armies of Turkey and Persia: an idea which has been entertained by English officers since the Crimean War.

“The necessity of making Turkestan participate in forthcoming events is strengthened by the circumstance that in the event of the termination of a war in any way unfavourable to us, we should most certainly have to evacuate the Turkestan province or limit our authority in that region. But should we be beaten both in Europe and Asia, we should have proved even by our disastrous enterprise the formidable nature of our position in Central Asia; and, being reduced by necessity to conclude a humiliating treaty, Russia might get off at the price of Turkestan, which would have risen in value.

“There can be no comparison between the risk we run in making a demonstration against British India and the enormous advantages which we should gain in the event of the success of such a demonstration. The gigantic difference in the results of a successful issue to us and to our enemies is of itself enough to urge us boldly onwards.

“On the proclamation of war with England, we should begin at once in Turkestan by despatching a Mission to Cabul and form a column in Samarcand (which, for effect, I should call an army), composed of 10 battalions, 14 sotnias [of Cossacks], and 40 guns, making a total of 10,000 to 12,000 men; this should positively be the minimum of our aggressive force.

“The object of the Mission should be to draw Shere Ali into an alliance with us, and to open relations with the disaffected natives of India; and in order to secure the success of these negotiations, the column should be pushed through the Bamian to Cabul. If it be found that Shere Ali adheres to the English (which is not very probable, because he did not accept the invitation to be present among other vassals on the occasion of the proclamation of the title of Empress of India at Delhi, and even

expressed his annoyance at the receipt of the invitation), a claimant to the throne should be put forward in the person of Abdurrahman Khan, who is residing in Samarcand; by which means internal dissensions might be brought about in Afghanistan, while on the other hand Persia might be conveniently urged to renew her claims to Herat. By turning Persia's attention to Afghanistan, we should divert her military forces from the Caucasus. The march of the Persian troops to Herat would call into requisition all the supplies and means of transport of the country, and this would most effectually paralyse any English plan of an advance from the Persian Gulf to Tiflis. The invading column having left Samarcand, another should be at once formed in that place of two battalions of infantry, and sixteen sotnias of Cossacks, with one battery of artillery for the purpose of occupying points along our line of communication and for general service in the rear.

"Without entering into details, I would divide the campaign into two periods. The first period should be one of extremely rapid action, of diplomatic negotiation with Afghanistan, supported by an advance of the column to Cabul. The second period, commencing with the occupation of Cabul, should be a waiting period, during which we should maintain relations with the disaffected elements in India, giving them the means to express themselves in the way best calculated to serve our interests (the principal reason of the failure of the Mutiny in 1857 was want of organisation on the part of the rebels), and finally—as also chiefly—to organise masses of Asiatic cavalry which, to a cry of blood and booty, might be launched into India as the vanguard, thus renewing the times of Timur.

"The further operations of the Russian column from Cabul cannot be sketched in this plan of campaign. At best, the operations might terminate in the presence of the Russian banners at Benares; at worst, the column would retire with honour to Herat, meeting a force despatched from the Caucasus, which should consist of several bat-

talions, with six guns to every 1000 men. An Asiatic force, especially the Turkomans, are not formidable in the open field; and even the invincible English army would thaw away very considerably in marching to Herat.<sup>1</sup> Nor are the English in a position to march a body of more than 25,000 men beyond the frontier of India, and of these a large number would have to be told off along the line of communication. It is at the same time not to be forgotten that the Turkestan province would be on the flank of the enemy's line of communication, and that our resources would increase as we drew nearer to the Caspian.

"I have already said this enterprise would be attended with risk. But it would be justified by the greatness of the object in view, and by the immeasurable vastness of its possible results. From the standpoint of these results there can be for Russia no question as to risk, and, as to Turkestan, it is not worth mentioning.

"From the troops which should be so fortunate as to be selected for this campaign, we should expect something even more than self-sacrifice in the highest sense of the word as it is understood by military men. Upon crossing the Hindu Kush the column should, in my opinion, be so managed that every man might feel that he had come to Afghanistan to conquer or to die; that each man might know that the Emperor required even his death. We should not be reproached for leaving our standards in the hands of the enemy if not a single Russian warrior remained alive beyond the Hindu Kush.

"Such a feeling and such a determination can, in my opinion, be based only on the sentiment commonly cherished by every soldier in the army, of an unswerving and boundless love for and devotion to his monarch. The difficulty of exalting the spirit of the column to a pitch

<sup>1</sup> "The acclimatised Russian troops are undoubtedly better qualified than English soldiers to endure the hardships of a Central Asian campaign."—*History of the War in Afghanistan*, by J. W. Kaye. [Skobeleff's Note.]

corresponding with the nature of the enterprise, could best be met by attaching one of the Emperor's sons, who at the proper time might tell the troops what was expected of them by the Czar and by their country. I am perfectly assured that this column, favoured by the presence of one of His Majesty's sons, would do wonders, and would in no case disgrace the Russian name.

"During the course of their ten years' experience in this region, the Turkestan troops have become trained to a systematic mode of military operations founded on a knowledge of local conditions, of the nature of their opponents, but principally on a consciousness of their readiness at any time to take the field. All this enables them to plan operations in the future in accordance with the military resources of Turkestan. If we continue to handle our troops as they have hitherto been handled, we shall not meet with any insurmountable obstacles in Central Asia. Asiatic crowds may inconvenience us, but they cannot hinder us in the accomplishment of our designs. We must bear in mind that in despatching, say from 16,000 to 20,000 men across the Hindu Kush with a corresponding force of artillery, of which we have no lack in Turkestan, being reinforced as above, we should still have 31,000 men left to garrison the province; and this, too, without drawing on the Oxus detachment (2 battalions, 4 sotnias, and 2 field guns), and without taking into account the troops in the Trans-Caspian region.

"We have doubtless a great deal more to go through in the future in Central Asia. But the present generation of Mohammedans born under the ægis of Russian law has first to grow up into manhood; ere that time an entire class of influential natives well acquainted with us, and recognising the causes of our power and of our success, will spring up. The notorious Nana Sahib was educated among Europeans, and was received in the best English society, and it was only on that account that he was such a terror to the English. We have as yet no such elements

in our midst, and in this circumstance lies one of our positive advantages over the English. When political events in the West are coming to a crisis, this important consideration, coupled with many others, should urge us to derive all the benefit out of Turkestan which that province is capable of yielding us.

“ ‘In Asia, when triumphs cease difficulties commence.’ ”<sup>1</sup>  
This is undoubtedly true. In a political sense we are now living in a period of triumphs. Let us profit by it.

“You see how much I expect from our might in Central Asia. Having for some considerable time shared with the Turkestan forces in the hardships of campaigning, I do not wish to exchange active service here for any other elsewhere. I could not, however, remain inactive in this place while the greater part of our army was shedding its blood in the country’s cause in the West. That is why I beg you again to bear me in mind in the event of a declaration of war.

MICHAEL SKOBELEFF.”

[PART OF POSTSCRIPT]

“ . . . It is my positive opinion that—

“1. If under the existing circumstances of the extent of the British authority in India the invasion of India with a corps of 18,000 men is a possibility and a desirability, although attended with risk, an invasion with a force of 50,000 men is perfectly free from all risk.

“2. We command on the Caspian from the early spring the means to concentrate with rapidity a force of 30,000 men at Astrabad, fully provided for.

“3. A large force can easily march from Astrabad to Herat and to Cabul. By exercising a political pressure on Persia, we might draw all our supplies from Khorassan.

“4. The Turkestan military district, reinforced with six regiments of Siberian Cossacks, three regiments of

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of the Duke of Wellington with Lord Auckland.*  
1839.

Orenburg Cossacks, six companies of infantry, and one battery or artillery from Western Siberia (these troops might reach Taskhend by spring time,) could send a body of 18,000 men with artillery to Cabul.

"5. The troops can be marched from Samarcand to the Hindu Kush, and can be further marched from Khullum through Haibuk, Kurram, and Bamian and across the Kora-Kotal, Dendan-Shiken, Ak-Robat, Kalui, Hadjikhak, and Unai passes, into the valley of Cabul-Daria. Although artillery has been taken over the above-named passes without extra appliances, I have nevertheless given my attention to this subject with the view of facilitating the passage of guns.

"I am now in a position to state that we have an easy method of transporting guns; yesterday a 4-pounder was slung under a newly contrived cart, and a trial with it was successfully made. On the merits of this mode of transport we can pronounce only in February next after practical experience; a trial is to be made with two guns over the snow-covered mountains in this regions.

"6. Shere Ali, the successor of Dost Mahommed, must necessarily contemplate the recovery of Peshawur, and it is not difficult to raise all Asia against India to a cry of 'blood and booty.'

"7. Shere Ali is at present dissatisfied with the English.

"8. There are barely more than 60,000 British soldiers in India at present, with a corresponding force of artillery, and the native is more a menace than a support to the rulers of India.

"9. The very appearance of even a small force on the Indian frontier is enough to raise a rebellion in India and to ensure the overthrow of the British dominion.

"All this should, in my mind, be taken into serious consideration at the present moment.

"KHOKAND, 27th January, 1877."

### APPENDIX III

EXTRACT FROM SKOBELEFF'S CONVERSATION WITH CHARLES  
MARVIN ON MARCH 8, 1882 <sup>1</sup>

" . . . As to a Russian invasion of India (he said), 'I do not think it would be feasible. I do not understand military men in England writing in the *Army and Navy Gazette*, which I take in and read, of a Russian invasion of India. I should not like to be commander of such an expedition. The difficulties would be enormous. To subjugate Akhal we had only 5000 men, and needed 20,000 camels. To get that transport we had to send to Orenburg, to Khiva, to Bokhara, and to Mangishlak for animals. The trouble was enormous. To invade India we should need 150,000 troops; 60,000 to enter India with, and 90,000 to guard the communications. If 5000 men needed 20,000 camels, what would 150,000 need? And where could we get the transport? We should require vast supplies, for Afghanistan is a poor country and could not feed 60,000 men, and we should have to fight the Afghan as well as you.'

"On my urging that the Afghan might be tempted by the bribe of the spoliation of India to side with the Russians, he said: 'I doubt it. To whom could we offer the bribe? If we bribed one Sirdar, you would bribe another. If we offered one rouble, you would offer two; if we offered two, you would offer five—you would beat us in this. No; the Afghans would fight us as readily as they fought you.'

<sup>1</sup> Extract from *The Russian Advance towards India*, by Charles Marvin (1882), pp. 103-6.

“ ‘But if you occupied Khorassan beforehand and made it a second Caucasus?’

“ ‘Why should we occupy Khorassan? We should only get provisions from the province, and we could get them as it is. We derive a revenue from Khorassan now, by its trade with Nijni Novgorod; but there would be a deficit if we occupied the province. I do not believe Russia would ever occupy Khorassan. I think the new frontier will be permanent. Do you know’—here he rose and spoke with vehemence, regarding me with a smile—‘I consider the Central Asian Question all humbug.’

“ ‘But in regard to the possibility of invading India, General Soboleff expressed to me a clear conviction on Monday that Russia could march an army to India if she chose.’

“ ‘That was diplomacy,’ replied Skobeleff; ‘of course, it is possible—all things are possible to a good general; but I should not like to undertake the task, and I do not think Russia would. Of course, if you enraged Russia; if, by your policy, you excited her, if you made her wild—that is the word—we might attempt it, even in spite of all the difficulties. For my part, I would only make a demonstration against India; but I would fight you at Herat.’ (He said this with great animation, but very good-humouredly.) ‘Do you know, I was very interested during your war whether you would occupy Herat or not. It would have been a mistake if you had done so. It would be difficult to march an army from the Caspian to Herat to fight you there, but we should be tempted to do it in the event of a war.’<sup>1</sup>

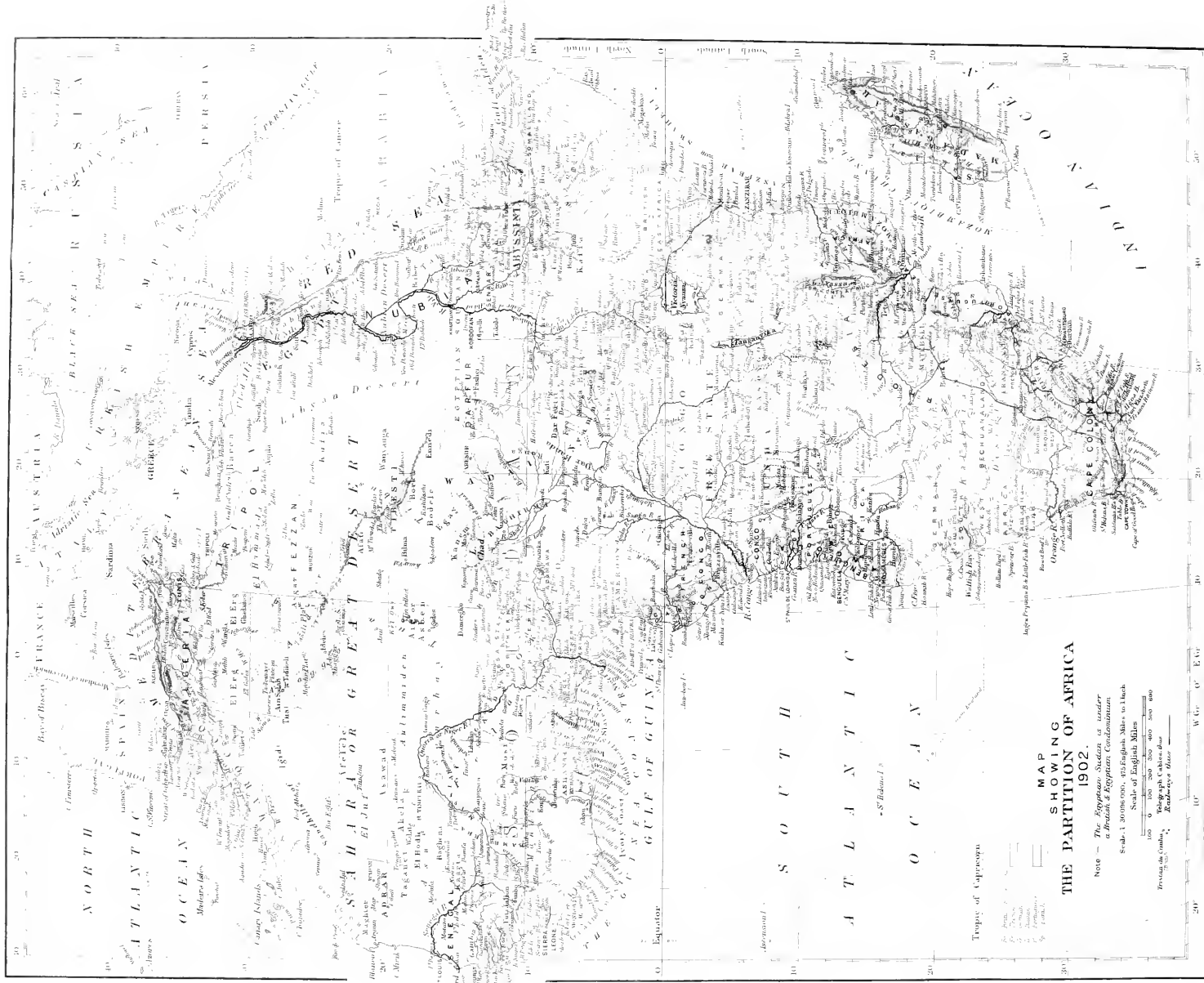
“ ‘He spoke slightly of the Transcaspian railway. At the very utmost he did not think it would be extended beyond Askabad. He ridiculed the notion of extending the line through Afghanistan to India, and considered its

<sup>1</sup> These statements are highly suggestive. Of course, the construction of the Transcaspian railway as far as Kushk has lessened Russia’s difficulties there. [J. H. R.]



continuation so improbable that he would not discuss the argument I advanced, that its completion to Herat or Candahar would facilitate a Russian march to the Indus. He thought things would remain in Afghanistan as they are for years to come. He would not agree with me that the junction of the two Empires in Central Asia is within measureable distance. He expressed a very contemptuous opinion of Afghanistan in general, referring to it as a country that was not worth the cost and trouble of either Empire to govern. He did not see what there was to tempt Russia to occupy it."







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